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MICHAEL JEFFREY PYM

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:
A CASE STUDY OF THE GREAT NORTH FOREST**

**MASTER OF ARTS
JUNE 1999**

ABSTRACT

This thesis reveals a number of difficulties for accountability in the partnership approach adopted in the implementation of sustainable development in the UK, and argues that these have serious implications for the success of such programmes.

Environmental policy has grown in importance in recent decades and this has led to the emergence of the sustainable development concept which attempts to encourage economic growth along a less environmentally damaging path. There is, however, no consensus about how sustainable development can be achieved and views vary from the use of market forces to reliance on participation by communities. Therefore, understanding how sustainable development can be realised is best approached through examination of practical implementation. For this, the Great North Forest Project, one of twelve Community Forests currently being established around England, has been chosen as a suitable case study.

At the Project's core is a formal organisation which merges into a more diffuse, wider network encompassing the many partners with an interest in the Project. The public sector has a major role in the Project but the resulting partnership arrangement is complex and confusing. Moreover, public sector accountability becomes more critical yet is diminished by the close working relationship between public, private and voluntary sectors.

Managerial accountability is emphasised in the Project but close scrutiny reveals that its application is troublesome because of the multiple objectives and numerous participants. Information quality and information flow are poor, with the consequence that apparent success tends to be overblown, public cost underestimated, and value for money not properly attended to. Furthermore, the suitability of the organisation may not be adequately considered because accountability arrangements tend to concentrate attention on objectives. This thesis suggests that this may have serious implications for the successful achievement of sustainable development elsewhere; it also stimulates doubts about the implementation of other programmes involving complex partnership arrangements.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF THE GREAT NORTH FOREST

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MICHAEL JEFFREY PYM

MASTER OF ARTS

**UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS
JUNE 1999**



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DECLARATION

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PREFACE

Much of the research for this thesis was undertaken between the Summer of 1994 and Spring 1996. However, serious illness then made continuation impossible and work was suspended for two years to be finally completed a year later in Summer 1999. Considerable effort has been made to ensure that this inconvenient intermission has not adversely effected the final thesis, but if any discontinuity is apparent to the reader, this preface ensures that the reason may be understood.

The research is based upon documents published by a wide range of bodies participating in the Great North Forest Project and publicly available. However, access was given to a number of internal documents which, for one reason or another, could only be inspected on request. Substantial use was also made of interviews with members of the Great North Forest's Members Steering Group and Chief Officer Groups, conducted in 1995 and 1996. These interviews were open ended and, to encourage interviewees to be as frank as possible, it was agreed that their comments would be 'off the record'. Consequently, views expressed in the text have been attributed to individuals in a general way to avoid placing them in an awkward or embarrassing position. Where necessary, correspondence with members and officers of relevant public bodies and other organisations helped to clarify matters and to elicit information not available in documentary form.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADAS	Agricultural Development and Advisory Service
BTCV	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CC	Countryside Commission
CF(s)	Community Forest(s)
CLA	Country Landowners Association
COI	Central Office of Information
CPRE	Council for the Protection of Rural England
DC	District Council
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (This Department, formed in 1997, brought together the former Department of the Environment, the Department of Transport and the Regional Government Offices)
DfEE	Department for Employment and Education (This Department, formed in 1997, brought together the former Department of Education and Department of Employment)
DNH	Department of National Heritage
DoE	Department of the Environment (See DETR)
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FC	Forestry Commission
FMI	Financial Management Initiative
FoE	Friends of the Earth
FWPS	Farm Woodland Premium Scheme
FWS	Farm Woodland Scheme
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GNF	Great North Forest
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food
MBC	Metropolitan Borough Council
MSG	Members Steering Group
NCC	Nature Conservancy Council
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body
NFU	National Farmers Union
NPM	New Public Management
NT	National Trust
OPS	Office of Public Service
OPSS	Office of Public Service and Science
QUANGO	Quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation
RDC	Rural Development Commission
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WGS	Woodland Grant Scheme

CHAPTER 1

THE ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE GREAT NORTH FOREST

1.1. INTRODUCTION

There is a growing tendency for the administration of public policy in the United Kingdom and elsewhere to be undertaken less by clearly defined and hierarchical organisations and more by, what are best described as, complex organisations. These organisations are flexible, decentralised, have multiple aims and include many groups contributing to decision making and participating in implementation.¹ Arguably, they are ideally suited to expansive areas of policy like the environment and, specifically, the vital matter of implementing sustainable development. It is unfortunate, then, that the more complex organisations become, the more difficult it is to identify and enforce responsibility; yet the more important it is to do so.

This thesis reflects upon the affinity between the implementation of sustainable development and the nature of complex organisations. Some important features of complex organisations are then examined through a study of a specific sustainable development initiative, the Great North Forest (GNF) Project which is currently underway in the north-east of England. The crucial role of the public sector in implementing sustainable development is central to the study. However, the public sector bodies involved in this Project are many and frequently distant from central and local government. They also work in partnership with numerous participating private and voluntary sector bodies and the complexity of this arrangement has serious implications for accountability. The study raises questions about contemporary views of accountability and the difficulties presented by complex organisations, which are of fundamental importance to the success of sustainable development. The implementation of public policies for the environment has attracted little academic attention; it is therefore hoped that the findings of this study may advance the understanding of this significant and growing area in public administration.

1.2. THE ENVIRONMENT

The term 'environment' has become something of a commonplace in the

¹ This term has most recently been used by Mark Bovens to describe a wide variety of public and private organisations that have emerged over recent years. The organisations described here are but a part of the larger group of complex organisations described by Bovens. The Quest for Responsibility: Accountability and Citizenship in Complex Organisations, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.10-11.

last quarter of the 20th Century, leading to a neglect in attention to its meaning. At its simplest, the environment refers to the objects or region surrounding something, coming, as it does, from the Old French 'environner', meaning 'to surround'. In the context used here, it could be taken to refer to man's natural surroundings. Arguably however, 'there is no such thing as "nature" unmediated by human beings, and therefore no great difference between the urban environment and the environment created by farmed land or deforestation': all environments are the result of the economic and social relations that underlie them.² So the term environment can refer to man's natural surroundings, if any such thing still exists; but may include the built environment, that is the buildings and other edifices that man has constructed; and the cultural environment, the less obvious of man's constructs like social, economic and political systems, even religion.³ The environment, in conclusion, is an ill defined term: it is simply 'where we all live', but clearly it 'does not exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions, and needs'.⁴

Concern about environmental degradation is not new. It is claimed, for example, that Britain had the earliest piece of environmental regulation in the form of a decree, issued by Edward I in 1273, prohibiting the burning of sea coal. By the 17th Century, such was the air pollution of the City of London that the diarist John Evelyn was moved to write:

...her inhabitants breathe nothing but an impure and [thick] Mist, accompanied with a fuliginous and filthy vapour, which renders them obnoxious to a thousand inconveniences, corrupting the Lungs and discarding the entire habit of their Bodies; so that Catarrhs, Phthisicks, Coughs and consumptions rage more in this one City, than in the whole Earth

² This, as Andrew Dobson points out, is predominantly a socialist argument which sees social relations and the capitalist mode of production as responsible for any particular environment, although the argument applies more generally. See Green Political Thought, 2nd Edition, (London: Routledge, 1995), p.175.

³ David Pearce, Anil Markandya & Edward B. Barbier, for example, include natural, built and cultural environments under the umbrella term 'environment'. See their Blueprint for a Green Economy, (London: Earthscan, 1989), p.2.

⁴ The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), Our Common Future, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), Foreword by Gro Harlem Brundtland, p.xi.

besides.⁵

However, it was the Industrial Revolution, 'by far the most important movement in social history since the Saxon conquest', as G.M.Trevelyan put it earlier this century,⁶ which did so much to increase the degree of environmental degradation, particularly pollution, and ushered in the modern practice of legislating against the worst excesses of human activity.⁷ Broadly speaking, what has developed over the last century and a half is a complex regulatory system which can roughly be divided into two groups. First, the regulation of emissions into the environment (the air, land, seas and rivers), which are dealt with through the pollution control system. Secondly, the conflicts arising from the competing demands of development and conservation, resolved through the land use planning system.⁸

In recent years, however, the environment has taken on a new importance. The focus of environmental concern now centres around the fear of a rise in global temperatures caused primarily by the emission of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. 'A few years ago', began a 1990 report by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, 'the notion that man could warm the earth by producing greenhouse gases was treated with some scepticism...Today, almost everybody is familiar with the notion, and most scientists accept that some warming will occur'.⁹ The fear of global warming has served to stimulate new thinking about the environment. It is now appreciated that knowledge of the environment is best acquired 'not by the isolated examination of the parts of the system

⁵ John Evelyn quoted in Derek Wall, Green History, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.45.

⁶ G.M.Trevelyan, English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries, Chaucer to Queen Victoria, [1941], (London: Penguin, 1986), p.386.

⁷ The main measures introduced since 1853 are given in Robert Garner, Environmental Politics, (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996), pp.88-89.

⁸ Garner suggests this approach as a means of understanding the regulatory system. Ibid., p.89.

⁹ Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, The Greenhouse Effect and Terrestrial Ecosystems of the UK, (London: HMSO, 1990), Preface by M.G.R.Cannell & M.D.Cooper (Eds), p.5.

but by examining the way in which these parts interact', or holistically.¹⁰ This view has also influenced thinking about how the environment can be protected and preserved in the face of man's desire for continued economic growth, resulting in the idea of sustainable development.

1.3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The term sustainable development originated in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) entitled 'Our Common Future', published in 1987, and now generally referred to as the Brundtland Report, after the Norwegian Chairwoman Gro Harlem Brundtland. In what has become a classic statement, the Report defines sustainable development as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.¹¹ However, despite the apparent simplicity of this statement, sustainable development, as Sir Crispin Tickell recently observed, 'has been variously understood and interpreted. It is not so much an idea as a convoy of ideas, and all single definitions have proved defective in one way or another'.¹²

Ideas like sustainable development undoubtedly arise from a belief that mankind is demanding too much of his environment: the finite resources of Earth cannot be equated with the infinite demands of man. This is not a novel concern and, in the mid-19th Century, John Stuart Mill expressed similar fears. He hoped for a 'stationary state' in man's affairs, saying:

If the earth must lose that great portion of its pleasantness which it owes to things that the unlimited increase of wealth and population would extirpate from it, for the mere purpose of enabling it to support a larger, but not a better or happier population, I sincerely hope, for the sake of posterity, that they will be content to be stationary, long before necessity

¹⁰ Dobson, for example, says that 'This act of synthesis, and the language of linkage and reciprocity in which it is expressed, is often handily collected in the term "holism"'. Green Political Thought, (1995), p.39.

¹¹ WCED, Our Common Future, (1987), p.43.

¹² British Government Panel on Sustainable Development, First Report, (London: DoE, January 1995), p.3. Pearce, Markandya & Barbier also make the point, quoting a 'Gallery of Definitions' of sustainable development in Blueprint for a Green Economy, (1989), pp.173-185.

compels them to it.¹³

However, far from being stationary, the core of sustainable development lies in an attempt to compromise the demands of economic development and growth with protection of the environment. As Frances Cairncross, has pointed out: 'Its virtue is that it allows people to think of compromises: of ways to temper growth, without sacrificing it entirely'.¹⁴ Therefore, in sustainable development is an acceptance that growth will continue, but a simultaneous belief that its effect on the environment can be minimised if the right path of development is chosen: 'technology and social organisation can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth', says the Brundtland Report, for example.¹⁵

Since 1987, sustainable development has risen in popularity and gathered widespread support. This is attested to by the support given to Agenda 21, one of the main products of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Agenda 21, it is said, 'forms the general guiding document for pursuing sustainable development and initiates significant institutional change'.¹⁶ The Agenda 21 document is lengthy, running to some 40 chapters, but its main recommendation was for 'participatory and community-based approaches' for achieving sustainable development combined with an acceptance of 'market principles'.¹⁷ The, so-called, Earth Summit was held some time after the establishment of the UK's Community Forest policy; however, Agenda 21 is an important document for understanding the thinking behind current approaches to sustainable development.

1.4. REALISING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

No single defining principle exists for the realisation of

¹³ John Stuart Mill, Principles of Political Economy with some applications to Social Philosophy, [1848], New Impression Edited with an introduction by Sir W.J.Ashley, (London: Longmans, 1920), pp.750-751.

¹⁴ Frances Cairncross, Costing the Earth, (London: The Economist, 1991), p.15.

¹⁵ WCED, Our Common Future, (1987), p.8.

¹⁶ Michael Grubb, Mathias Koch, Abby Munson, Francis Sullivan & Roy Thomson, The Earth Summit Agreements: A Guide and Assessment, (London: Earthscan, 1993), p.xiii.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.xv.

sustainable development, but that there are economic, political and social, and institutional dimensions is generally acknowledged.

ECONOMIC MEASURES

Environmental issues, like those of pollution or conflicts between growth and conservation, are often explained in economic terms. The environment is made up of what economists would call public goods¹⁸ (the air, seas, a peaceful place, a beautiful vista, for example) and therefore no market exists for their exchange. Consequently, the full social costs of consuming environmental goods are not always taken into account, and they are prone to overuse. For example, a company may discharge polluting effluent from a production process into the air or sea at little or no cost to the company, but at considerable cost to the local community who breathe the foul air or fish the polluted sea.¹⁹ Sustainable development can also be viewed in economic terms and, arguably, its realisation would follow from correcting the market failures associated with consumption of environmental goods. In the above example, the material used in the production process could be taxed to encourage the company to move to cleaner production processes. Alternatively, the company might be required to purchase pollution permits to allow the production process to be continued but at increased cost. Either way, the private costs of the process are brought closer to the social costs. The use of these economic instruments is the focus of the, so-called, Pearce Report prepared for the Department of the Environment (DoE) in 1989²⁰, and this is echoed in the UK Government's White Paper on the environment published in 1990.²¹

¹⁸ Briefly, public goods have three defining characteristics: first, they yield 'non-rivalrous' consumption, that is, no person can be deprived of their use by consumption by another person. Secondly, they are 'non-excludable' so that no person can be excluded from using them, and, finally, they are frequently 'non-rejectable', that is, individuals cannot abstain from using them.

¹⁹ A fuller discussion of the economic approach to environmental problems is given in the articles entitled 'Pollution', by R.Levacic, and 'Conservation', by R.Shone, in Peter Johnson & Barry Thomas (Eds), Economic Perspectives on Key Issues, (Oxford: Phillip Allen, 1985), pp.56-89.

²⁰ Pearce, Markandya, & Barbier, Blueprint for a Green Economy, (1989), Note 1, p.171.

²¹ 'In the Government's view, market mechanisms offer a more efficient and flexible response to environmental issues, both old and new'. DoE, This Common Inheritance: Britain's Environmental Strategy, [Cm.1200], (London: HMSO, 1990), para.1.28, p.14.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MEASURES

In contrast to the Pearce Report, the slightly earlier Brundtland Report tended to place more emphasis on the political and social aspects of implementing sustainable development. Admittedly the World Commission ensured that its terms of reference were broadly drawn and the role of institutions in the process was discussed at length. However, the Report does make great play of the need for 'equitable opportunities for all', 'education', and 'greater public participation' in the decision making process.²² Moreover, the Commission considered participation from a wide range of groups in society - public bodies, private organisations, voluntary groups (or non-governmental bodies) and the community at large - to be necessary for achieving sustainable development.²³ This sentiment is echoed in the UK Government's environmental White Paper²⁴ where it is combined with market methods.

The extension of thinking about sustainable development beyond the economic should be no surprise. The environment, as a public good, is, after all, also common property. Moreover, the nature of such 'common' goods intuitively suggests that their maintenance is a concern for the community as a whole. Perhaps fortuitously, the rise of sustainable development has coincided with a resurgence of interest in the idea of 'community' more generally, vague though that term may be.²⁵ Community has particular resonance in the environmental movement since it has been a traditional response to environmental threats, as Jonathon Porritt and David Winner point out:

Time after time, local groups have emerged to fight local campaigns to stop a section of urban motorway, to save a few acres of woodland or to stop an industrial plant threatening their

²² WCED, Our Common Future, (1987), pp.44,46 & 63.

²³ Ibid., p.326.

²⁴ 'The responsibility for our environment is shared. It is not the duty for Government alone. It is an obligation on us all. We set out...how everyone can help and what everyone can do - business, government (central and local), schools, voluntary bodies and individuals'. DoE, This Common Inheritance, (1990), para.1.38, p.16.

²⁵ There are real problems in defining a community as Nelson W.Polsby pointed out in 'The Study of Community Power' in David L.Stills (Ed), International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, (London: Macmillan & Free Press, 1968), p.157. More recently, Hugh Butcher has said that community 'is one of those "hoorah" words that seems to encourage warm and positive feelings at the expense of precise and meaningful analysis'. See Hugh Butcher, A.Glen, P.Henderson & J.Smith (Eds), Community and Public Policy, (London: Pluto Press, 1993), p.3.

community.²⁶

Moreover, comparison has recently been made between the restoration of civic virtues and protection of the environment in the way that they both concern 'duties that lay moral claims on us from which we derive no immediate benefit or even long-term payoff'.²⁷ Community has also become a concept popular in the UK as a means of implementing a wide range of policies. The most notable of these is perhaps Community Care, but the prefix 'community' is now quite common throughout the public policy spectrum.²⁸ However, community is an echo of past ideas about how society should be formulated which stretches back to Aristotle and the ancient Greeks. Earlier this Century Mary Parker Follett based her New State upon community, saying:

Our vital relation to the Infinite consists of our capacity...to bring forth a group idea, to create a common life. But we have at present no machinery for a constructive life. The organisation of neighbourhood groups will give us this machinery.²⁹

Community is also seen as something of an antidote to the narrow market orientated individualism of the neo-liberal state,³⁰ and, perhaps because of the decline of many social structures from church to corner shop, there has been renewed interest in the idea of 'communitarianism' in recent years.³¹

²⁶ Jonathon Porritt & David Winner, The Coming of the Greens, (London: Fontana, 1988), p.17.

²⁷ Amitai Etzioni, The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Communitarian Agenda, (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p.44.

²⁸ For example, five such public policy illustrations are given in Butcher, Glen, Henderson & Smith (Eds) Community and Public Policy, (1993), pp.5-11.

²⁹ Mary Parker Follett, The New State: Group Organisation, the solution of Popular Government, [1918], (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1965), p.4.

³⁰ Raymond Plant comments, for example, that 'Hegel, T.H.Green, Bosanquet, Tawney, Raymond Williams and Robert Paul Wolf have all in different ways invoked the ideal of community as a way of trying to combat...[the] baneful features of liberal society, so modern communitarian thought is not really new'. Modern Political Thought, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p.325.

³¹ According to Simon Caney, communitarianism can be characterised as follows: 'First, communitarians make descriptive claims about the nature and essence of persons, arguing that individuals are social creatures whose identity is shaped by their community...Secondly, communitarians make normative claims and defend the value of community, public participation and civic virtue...Thirdly, communitarians make a meta-ethical claim about the status of political principles...arguing that correct values for a given community are those that accord with the shared values of that community'. See 'Liberalism and Communitarianism: a Misconceived Debate', Political Studies, Vol.XL, (1992), pp.273-274.

THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS

The final point to make about the realisation of sustainable development concerns the role of institutions in the process. The most important institutions are those of government; as Cairncross points out, 'environmental policy is inevitably interventionist. Without government intervention, the environment cannot be fully protected'.³² Moreover, the role of national governments in sustainable development is comprehensive because no other institution or body has the authority to regulate or administer economic incentives in the way that governments can. Furthermore, if social and political factors are considered, then governments must also be involved in improving education, widening democracy and encouraging community action in the pursuit of sustainable development. Governments are, therefore, crucial to the realisation of sustainable development and their role is nothing if not complex, due to the wide range of functions that they need to perform.

The complexity of the government's role is augmented by the expansive nature of the environment itself. It is curious in its breadth, and environmental policy overlaps every other policy area, making it difficult to compartmentalize.³³ In the UK until recently, a department existed expressly for the protection of the environment, that was the DoE.³⁴ However, 'environmental issues cut across the established structures of Whitehall'³⁵, making the DoE a particularly good example of the practical difficulties of allocating functions to government departments.³⁶ Environmental policy and particularly sustainable development are therefore frequently administered by many departments of government and other public bodies, all contributing in their own particular way to the whole.

³² Cairncross, Costing the Earth, (1991), p.16.

³³ John McCormick, British Politics and the Environment, (London: Earthscan, 1991), p.14.

³⁴ In 1997 the DoE was brought together with the Department of Transport and Regional Government Offices to form the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR).

³⁵ John Bradbeer, 'Environmental Policy: Past and Future Agendas', in Stephen P. Savage, Rob Atkinson & Lynton Robbins (Eds), Public Policy in Britain, (London: Macmillan, 1994), p.116.

³⁶ The practical difficulties of allocating functions to departments were famously noted by Charles H. Wilson in his lecture delivered at the 24th Haldane Memorial Lecture in 1956, entitled 'Haldane and the Machinery of Government'. See p.17 in particular.

In addition to this lateral complexity, environmental policy is complicated in two other respects. First, the idea of sustainable development has a social dimension associated with community and, as with the environment, has geographical connotations of localness. Moreover, in administrative terms in the UK, it has been observed that the 'responsibility for meaningful action to protect and improve the environment seems to have been devolved to a large extent to local councils and communities'.³⁷ Thus a vertical dimension of complexity also exists because responsibilities for the environment, and therefore sustainable development, reside at the level of both central and local government.

Secondly, it must be recognised that in the British system of government, there exists a wide range of administrative bodies which cannot be neatly categorised as departments of state or as local government. These are 'government-created and semi-private organisations which are both distinct from, but usually relate to, either central government departments or local authorities' and are generally referred to as 'quasi-government'.³⁸ The most obvious amongst these bodies are quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations (QUANGOs) or, more correctly, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), and these will be discussed more fully later.³⁹ However, since the launch of the Next Steps initiative in 1988, the administrative map has been complicated still further by the separation of administrative functions of many departments from the policy centre to produce a new group of organisations known as Agencies. As will become apparent during the course of this thesis, the responsibility for implementing sustainable development policies like the GNF, frequently lies with the wide range of quasi-governmental organisations which operate at arm's length from

³⁷ Ken Peattie & Gareth Hall, 'The Greening of Local Government: A Survey', Local Government Studies, (1994), Vol.20, No.3, p.482.

³⁸ John Greenwood & David Wilson, Public Administration in Britain Today, 2nd Edition, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p.209.

³⁹ The terminology to describe these bodies is signally complex and unsatisfactory. This has been noted on numerous occasions and many efforts have been made to clear the matter up. However, as Grant Jordan points out: 'There is no simple (or reliable) guide. The problem is not only nomenclature, however, but delimiting these categories - howsoever they are labelled'. See his The British Administrative System: Principles Versus Practice, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.33. See also Anthony Barker (Ed), Quangos in Britain: Government and the Networks of Policy-Making, (London: Macmillan, 1982).

the democratically accountable bodies of central or local government.

In conclusion, the role of government institutions in pursuing sustainable development is both substantial and complex. They carry the responsibility for selecting, establishing, enforcing and administering a wide range of regulatory and economic instruments in the environmental field. Moreover, such is the complex nature of environmental policy that considerable coordination - between departments of state, local authorities, agencies and quasi-autonomous bodies - is required for the successful implementation of sustainable development policy. The study of the organisations responsible for the coordination of these many and varied bodies is crucial. However, it is the difficulties of accountability in such a complex arrangement that are of most interest since accountability is dispersed among many public sector bodies often operating at a distance from central and local government. Moreover, accountability becomes more important and complicated because the public sector is increasingly operating in close partnership with private and voluntary sector groups which have their own interests to pursue.

1.5. THE COMMUNITY FOREST POLICY AND THE GREAT NORTH FOREST

The UK's forest and woodland cover stands at around 10%, low by European standards, but a considerable improvement on the mere 5% that existed at the turn of the century. This dramatic increase in tree cover is mainly the result of large scale afforestation undertaken for strategic reasons after World Wars I and II by the Forestry Commission (FC). In 1990, 43% of the forest area of the UK remained in public hands with the remainder being privately owned. At 28%, a high proportion is composed of broadleaf stands with a rotation age of around 120 years; the remainder being more rapidly maturing conifers. Total domestic production meets only about 15% of total domestic consumption.⁴⁰

MULTIPURPOSE FORESTRY

The strategic imperative for expanding forestry in the UK has declined in importance in the last fifty years. Forestry is now seen in a broader context; as multipurpose, with a wide range of objectives and

⁴⁰ Figures from Kullervo Knusela, European Forest Institute Research Report 1: Forest Resources in Europe 1950-1990, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.57.

not dissimilar to the medieval view.⁴¹ That national forestry policy should be based on multiple objectives was a recommendation made by the Countryside Commission (CC) in a major statement on the future of forestry in the UK published in 1987. In the CC's view, the objectives of forestry should be to produce a national supply of timber as a raw material and as a source of energy; offer an alternative to agricultural use of land; contribute to rural employment either in timber industries or through associated recreation developments; create attractive sites for public enjoyment; enhance the natural beauty of the countryside; and create wildlife habitats. 'In future', said the statement, 'all forestry proposals should aim to fulfil in different measures all of these objectives'.⁴²

In addition to the purposes noted above, forestry is also seen to have specific environmental benefits, as noted in the 1990 White Paper on the environment:

Forests, woodlands and trees...provide one of the most effective ways by which carbon dioxide can be absorbed from the atmosphere and stored for long periods of time. They also provide timber which, if converted into durable products, can further prolong the storage process.⁴³

Moreover, as the British Government Panel on Sustainable Development commented: 'More clearly than in many other sectors of the economy, forestry can demonstrate what is meant by sustainable development',⁴⁴ and, importantly, forestry represents a notable tool for controlling atmospheric carbon dioxide levels which contribute to global warming (although the role that a country like the UK can play is, admittedly, small).

THE COMMUNITY FOREST POLICY

The creation of urban fringe or Community Forests (CFs) was one of the multi-purpose forestry initiatives proposed by the CC in 1987 (the

⁴¹ John Blunden & Nigel Curry point out the ease with which we forget the diversity of benefits derived from medieval woodlands: 'The coppice stand system of management', they say, 'yielded everything from walking sticks to house timbers, provided shelter for man and beast, fodder for domestic and game animals, sporting opportunities, dominant landscape features and a rich variety of habits for flora and fauna'. A Future for Our Countryside, (Oxford: Blackwell & The CC, 1988), pp.92.

⁴² CC, Forestry in the Countryside, [CCP 245], (Cheltenham: CC, 1987), paras.13-14, p.7.

⁴³ DoE, This Common Inheritance, (1990), para.7.25, p.100.

⁴⁴ British Government Panel on Sustainable Development, Second Report, January 1996, para.35, p.16.

other being the creation of the National Forest in the Midlands):

We believe that a number of...forests adjacent to big cities would create a pleasant environment for the public to enjoy, and in doing so would be a means of restoring some derelict land and managing other land of limited agricultural value. The forests would provide employment opportunities in associated recreational developments. They would, by enhancing the environment, make those areas better places in which people live and work. In the course of time they would produce timber with a commercial value.⁴⁵

A feasibility study was undertaken in 1988 which satisfied the CC and FC of the suitability of the CF initiative⁴⁶ and, in 1989, a programme of twelve CFs was launched jointly by the CC and FC.

The sites for the three 'lead projects' were Thames Chase, east of London; The Forest of Mercia in south Staffordshire; and the Great North Forest (GNF) in south Tyne and Wear and north-east Durham. The remaining nine, in Cleveland, south Yorkshire, Merseyside, west Manchester, north Nottingham, Bedford, south Hertfordshire, Swindon, and Bristol, were announced in 1991 (see Appendix 1).⁴⁷ The CFs vary in size from around 9,000 to 92,000 hectares, an area totalling more than 450,000 hectares or 'approximately 3.6% of all land in England, [and] equivalent to about half the combined size of all the National Parks'.⁴⁸ The CF programme is now firmly established as part of the sustainable development programme being pursued by the UK Government.

THE GREAT NORTH FOREST

The northern region of England has particular environmental problems due to the large areas of derelict land which have been left following the dramatic decline of heavy industry over the past few decades.⁴⁹ It also has a very low proportion of land under forest or

⁴⁵ CC, Forestry in the Countryside, (1987), para.77, p.23.

⁴⁶ GNF, 'Members Steering Group Report', Annex 1, 'Memorandum of Agreement for the Great North Forest 1993-96', (Chester-le-Street: Great North Forest, 21/10/92), para.2.6, p.2.

⁴⁷ GNF, Forest Plan, (Chester-le-Street: GNF, 1994), para.1.7, p.4.

⁴⁸ CC, The Community Forest Unit, Community Forests - growing from Vision to Reality, [CCP 412], (London: CC, 1995), para.1.15, p.4.

⁴⁹ The Northern Region Councils Association commented in 1989 that: 'Since 1970, more than 200,000 jobs have been lost in the shipbuilding, heavy engineering, and coal industries in the Region. Such extensive industrial restructuring has seen large plants and tracts of land fall into disuse, often with additional problems of chemical contamination or instability', Northern Region of England: Report 1989,

woodland - a mere 4% compared to 7% in the rest of England - because of the industrial use of timber in the mining industry.⁵⁰ Both of these problems are being tackled through afforestation schemes in the region and the GNF will contribute towards this by increasing woodland cover from 4% to around 30%⁵¹ over an area of approximately 175 square kilometres (67.5 square miles)⁵², as shown in Appendix 2. It is the smallest Community Forest after Thames Chase and will take a period of thirty to forty years to establish; however, the entire CF initiative is expected to 'contribute significantly' towards increasing forest cover to 15% in England by the year 2050.⁵³

The GNF was formally established in February 1990 as a partnership between the CC, the FC, and five local authorities - Gateshead and South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Councils, City of Sunderland Council, Chester-le-Street District Council and Durham County Council. These seven bodies form the core of the organisation which has been established to develop and implement the initiative, but the partnership has been extended to include numerous other public, private and voluntary bodies.

1.6. OVERVIEW OF THESIS

In this chapter the concept of sustainable development and the approaches towards its achievement have been introduced. Sustainable development is a complex and relatively new area of environmental policy which is being approached through community organisations but with due regard to the market. The public sector has a critical role to play in this process but is intended to work in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors. However, the institutional arrangements are complicated and this raises serious questions about accountability and responsibility. The GNF, with its origins in the multipurpose forestry strategy will serve as a case study for the implementation of sustainable

(Newcastle upon Tyne: Northern Region Councils Association, 1989), para.9.1, p.9.

⁵⁰ See Northern Region Councils Association, Northern Region of England: Profile 1992, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Northern Region Councils Association, 1992), para.2.3, p.3.

⁵¹ GNF, Forest Advisory Forum Report, (Chester-le-Street: GNF, 26/7/94), para.4.

⁵² GNF, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', (21/10/92), para.3.2, p.3.

⁵³ CC, Position Statement: Sustainability & the Countryside, [CCP 432], (Cheltenham: CC, 1993), p.6.

development, providing an opportunity to explore the difficulties that exist for its successful achievement.

Chapter Two examines the policy process which led to the emergence of the Community Forest initiative in 1987. It considers the aims and objectives of the programme, the participants, the instruments chosen for its implementation and the organisational arrangements through which it is being administered. Special consideration is given to the role of the public sector in the initiative and attention is drawn to the particular difficulties associated with responsibility and accountability.

In Chapter Three, the organisation established to implement the GNF Project is explored in detail. Here the formal organisation - the Project Team, and advisory and steering groups - is considered, together with the wider organisation - businesses, voluntary and community groups, and supporting public sector organisations. Attention is focused on hierarchical control and the organisational lines of responsibility that exist, to assess their value in ensuring the accountability of the participating public bodies.

Chapter four examines the management of the GNF Project and the progress made in its establishment since inception in 1990. The achievements and difficulties identified in interview by those involved in the Project are considered, and the success of the Project is estimated from published data. The chapter focuses upon the managerial methods of accountability which have replaced and supplemented more traditional hierarchical systems. The difficulties of applying managerial accountability in complex organisations like those found in the case study are discussed and its value in ensuring public sector accountability are assessed.

Finally, Chapter Five provides a summary of the important features of this research. The combination of market methods with the community in the partnership approach developed for the implementation of sustainable development produces a complex pattern of organisation. These organisations offer a higher degree of flexibility and responsiveness, and they tend to rely less on hierarchy for control and more on managerial methods. However, it is argued that managerial accountability does not function well in such complicated arrangements. Success may be overrated and cost underestimated as participating public bodies struggle to meet the many objectives laid down for them. This raises particular

concerns about the value for money obtained through the partnership approach to the implementation of sustainable development, and may have wider implications for the success of this important new area of public policy.

CHAPTER 2

THE COMMUNITY FOREST PROGRAMME

2.1. INTRODUCTION

According to David B. Truman: 'Predictions concerning the consequences of given political activities are based upon conceptions of the governmental process'.⁵⁴ After examining the role of interest groups in the formal institutions of government, Truman saw the process of government in much the same way as Arthur F. Bentley had earlier this century. Bentley observed that: 'All phenomena of government are phenomena of groups pressing one another, forming one another, and pushing out new groups and group representatives...to mediate the adjustments'.⁵⁵ The political process could, therefore, be attributed to the constant interplay of group pressures with each group basing its demands on a rational assessment of its own interests. The 'raw materials' of any study of government, said Bentley, lie in the activities of the concerned groups and the relationships which exist between them: 'there are no political phenomena except group phenomena'.⁵⁶ The group approach is particularly relevant to the study of the multipurpose forestry policy, because it evolved from the interactions of many groups with disparate interests. Arguably, the policy is a convenient solution to a set of difficulties rather than the imposition of an ideological imperative, and the CF programme is simply part of that broader policy.

The objective of this chapter is to illustrate the unusual complexity of the CF programme. First, the process of group interaction which led to the programme is examined through discussion of the relevant debates about agriculture, forestry, planning and the environment. Secondly, implementation is considered; the participating groups and bodies are identified together with the aims and objectives of the programme, and the instruments chosen to encourage participation. Special attention is given to the many public sector organisations involved and the vital role they have in promoting and steering the programme through a mixture of economic instruments, advice, agreements and planning.

⁵⁴ David B. Truman, The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 503.

⁵⁵ Arthur F. Bentley, The Process of Government: A Study of Social Pressures, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908), p. 269.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 222.

Concluding the chapter, the unusual way in which the participating groups are brought together to develop each Forest is explained. The arrangement centres around a formal organisation which is distant from both central and local government, and involves the public sector working in close partnership with private and voluntary groups. This presents particular difficulties for public sector accountability and responsibility and these are briefly reviewed.

2.2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY

The origins of the CF programme lie in a need to diversify rural land use which emerged in the early 1980s. It is claimed that four factors 'influenced the development of the CF concept and will affect its evolution in future years'. These are agricultural change, forestry policy, urban pressure and environmental awareness,⁵⁷ and it is convenient to use these four factors as a framework to discuss the development of policy.

AGRICULTURAL CHANGE

The dominant force in shaping agriculture in Europe over the last 40 years has been the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Established in the shadow of World War Two as a means of uniting those nations committed to a common market in Europe, its objectives, defined by the Treaty of Rome, were 'to increase agricultural productivity...; thus to ensure a fair standard of living for the agricultural community...; to stabilise markets...; to ensure the availability of supplies [and] to ensure that supplies reach consumers at reasonable prices'.⁵⁸ These objectives have largely been attained: the European Union now enjoys self-sufficiency in agriculture; incomes in the industry are higher than may have otherwise been the case; technological changes have been introduced, significantly increasing productivity; and a single and unified market in European agriculture has resulted.⁵⁹ However, despite its apparent success, the

⁵⁷ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.2.1, p.5.

⁵⁸ Article 39 of the Treaty of Rome, reprinted in K.R.Simmonds, European Treaties, (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1980).

⁵⁹ Valerio Lintner & Sonia Mazey, The European Community: Economic and Political Aspects, (London: McGraw-Hill, 1991), pp.97-99.

CAP has been criticised on a number of counts. First, it has led to over production of some foodstuffs increasing the cost of price support, storage and disposal of some goods which are often sold at a loss. Secondly, the insecticides, herbicides and pesticides used in intensive agricultural practices are claimed to be environmentally damaging, raising concerns about the safety of foods produced in this way and the impact on the land on which they are grown. Finally, the high level of financial assistance given to the farming industry, through the price support system and grants, runs counter to the principles of free trade which are internationally supported through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and similar agreements. As a consequence of these criticisms a programme of reform of the CAP has been undertaken in Europe in recent years.

According to the Commission of the European Communities, the first modest action to curb agricultural overproduction occurred in 1979. Since then, a variety of initiatives have been introduced to reduce production and, since 1988, to contain the growth in European Union (EU) spending on agriculture.⁶⁰ The removal of land from agricultural production is the main tool of CAP reform and there are two ways this is being attempted in the UK. The first is the 'set-aside' policy introduced in 1988, which compensates farmers for land left fallow. This scheme has been criticised, however, because it is seen as the virtual abandonment of large parcels of land, and because publicly funding farmers to do nothing is considered worse than paying them to overproduce. The scheme is also prone to failure because it encourages farmers to 'set-aside' poorer land and use compensation payments to finance increased intensification of their remaining land, in order to maintain income.⁶¹

An alternative to set-aside is the conversion of agricultural land to forestry. This was seen as a solution to the problem of overproduction as early as 1980 when the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities suggested that surplus land should be turned over to

⁶⁰ Commission of the European Communities, Our Farming Future, (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Community, 1993), p.17.

⁶¹ This problem, called 'slippage', has been well documented in the USA and Germany according to Friends of the Earth (FoE). Special Briefing, Set-Aside: Money for Nothing, (London: FoE, 1992), pp.2-3.

forestry.⁶² The role of forestry in the process of agricultural reform grew in popularity and in 1986, for example, the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) noted that: 'There seems much merit...in the afforestation of some lowland agricultural land, as an alternative to excess food production'.⁶³ By 1987 the House of Commons Agriculture Committee was giving the idea serious consideration and reported in 1990 that: 'We concentrated our investigations on forestry as this had been identified as the main alternative use for surplus agricultural land'.⁶⁴

Clearly, conversion of agricultural land to forestry offers a practical response to many of the criticisms of the CAP. Forestry would remove land from agricultural production, reducing output and the need for high levels of financial support currently provided to the sector through the CAP. In doing so, it is also hoped that many of the tensions arising from the needs of farmers and the demands for conservation can be ameliorated. The new CFs are part of this forestry programme although they will not be large areas of continuous woodland, rather a mixed landscape more akin to the medieval idea of forest.⁶⁵ The object of the initiative with regard to farmers is to integrate woodland with agriculture 'in a manner that encourages farmers and landowners to manage their land for conservation, to meet the demand for increased recreation, and to provide managed access to public open space'.⁶⁶

FORESTRY POLICY

Both the state and private forestry sectors in the UK underwent considerable change during the 1980s and early 1990s. First, the state sector was rationalised by the Conservative Government, beginning in 1981 with a programme of disposal of surplus FC land, intended to raise £84m

⁶² House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities, 24th Report, EEC Forestry Policy, [HL259], (London: HMSO, 4/11/80).

⁶³ NCC, Nature conservation and afforestation in Britain, (Peterborough: NCC, 1986), p.77.

⁶⁴ House of Commons Agriculture Committee, Second Report, Land Use and Forestry, Vol.1, (London: HMSO, 10/1/90), paras.1-2, p.xi.

⁶⁵ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), p.3.

⁶⁶ CC, Community Forest Unit, Farming in Community Forests: The opportunities and the benefits, [CCP 416], (London: CC, 1993), p.2.

for the Treasury.⁶⁷ However, forestry remained in difficulty and, in 1984, the Director General of the FC reported that the timber industry was facing the worst trade recession since the 1930s, leaving the FC unable to meet its 3% target rate of return, despite continued sales of land.⁶⁸ Such a return was substantially lower than the 5% expected from other public sector investments, moreover, it was estimated that the FC was still costing £50 million a year in 1987.⁶⁹

Although much criticism was aimed at the costs involved in maintaining a publicly funded forestry body, the FC was also condemned for its poor environmental record. In an attempt to provide a strategic reserve of softwood, it was claimed that large areas of countryside had been despoiled by blanket afforestation which was not only harsh on the eye but also inhospitable to wildlife and caused acidification of land and water courses.⁷⁰ It was argued that this costly and environmentally damaging outcome was partly the result of the conflict between the FC's dual roles as manager of the state's forests and as regulator for the industry.⁷¹ Separating these roles was recommended by the House of Commons Agriculture Committee in 1990,⁷² and, in 1991 Robin Cutler, the FC's Director General, announced that a new structure would be established. The FC would be separated into 'the Forestry Authority, the regulatory body that examines planting applications, and the Forestry Enterprise, the nationalised industry which owns more than two million acres of woodland all over the country and is responsible for promoting planting in the private sector'.⁷³

Nevertheless, the question of privatising the FC remained and the

⁶⁷ 'Forestry Commission for sale', The Economist, 15/2/85.

⁶⁸ Mr. Holmes, Director General of the FC. 18th Report from the Committee of Public Accounts, Session 1983-84, Quinquennial revaluation of assets and review of performance, Forestry Commission: The Forestry Enterprise, [HC 265], (London: HMSO, 16/4/84), Para. 1892 of minutes.

⁶⁹ 'Coming up green', The Economist, 12/12/87.

⁷⁰ This is explained in some detail in the NCC's, Nature conservation and afforestation in Britain, (1986).

⁷¹ Marion Shoard, 'Forests: profit with pleasure', The Times, 17/6/89.

⁷² Charles Clover, 'Forestry split will "balance rival needs"', The Daily Telegraph, 2/2/90.

⁷³ Charles Clover, 'Forestry chief to split powers of Commission', The Daily Telegraph, 4/4/91.

Government set up the forestry review group in March 1993, in part to look into the 'options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands'.⁷⁴ Concluding in 1994, it announced that the Forestry Commission should remain in the public sector. However, the Secretary of State did announce the replacement of the Forest Enterprise arm of the FC with 'a new trading body, established as a next steps agency' which would still be part of the Forestry Commission, but would 'deal at arm's length with other parts of the commission'.⁷⁵

The second major change in forestry concerned economic incentives, and the system of grants and taxation which encouraged the private sector to undertake large scale conifer planting in environmentally sensitive highland areas. The tax and grant system which existed to encourage the planting of new forests by the private sector is a complex one. However, in simple terms it allowed investors, particularly those paying the top rate of tax, to purchase hill country through forestry companies. This land was then cleared for planting, raising its value by 70-100%; planted with conifers, attracting generous grants from the FC; and the expense of this work off-set against tax. The woodland would then be sold after about ten years with capital gains tax paid on the land but not on the trees. Not only did this allow taxable income to be converted into untaxed capital, but tax concessions weakened the ability of the FC to control where trees were planted because owners often chose to forgo grants to escape the need for the FC's permission to plant.⁷⁶

The sale of FC land in the early 1980s found favour with some conservationists for the increased supply of woodland that it provided to the private sector, and the consequent reduction in the need for large scale conifer planting elsewhere. However, this was undermined by the tax and grant system which, by 1986, was under criticism by the NCC for the automatic granting of tax relief for all planting, whether or not it had

⁷⁴ DoE, FC, MAFF, *The Government's Response to the First Report from the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment, Forestry and the Environment*, [Cm.2259], (London: HMSO, June 1993), p.14, Annex. Reply by Mr.Lang.

⁷⁵ The 'Forestry Review' announced by Ian Lang, The Secretary of State for Scotland, to the Commons. *Weekly Hansard (Commons)*, No.1663, (London: HMSO, 19/7/94), Col.177.

⁷⁶ 'Money that grows on trees', *The Economist*, 10/5/86, p.25. This article provides an explanation of how the tax and grant system works and how it leads to poor planting decisions.

been approved by the FC for grant-aid.⁷⁷ There was also increasing anxiety about the relationship between nature conservation and afforestation, and the NCC Chairman wrote that 'we continue to be very concerned...we believe that...new policies are required which reconcile the economic and social objectives with those of nature conservation and amenity as harmoniously as possible'.⁷⁸ In addition to the conservation and environmental consequences of the government's tax policy on private forestry, there remained the question of its cost. This was not thought to be high, but figures of £10 to £15 million a year for tax relief and £7 million a year for grants were suggested, although these amounts did not include losses in capital gains tax.⁷⁹ The result was the abolition of tax relief on forestry in the 1988 Budget with the removal of the planting and management of commercial woodlands from the income tax system.⁸⁰

Large scale conifer planting was found to be environmentally damaging and contrary to the demands for conservation, and the production of softwoods from conifers was uneconomic, providing a low return on investment unless artificially supported. The environmental and economic problems of large scale conifer forests, relevant to both the private and state sectors, led to a belief that timber may not be the only objective of forestry. It was recognised that financial returns could also come from the use of forests for recreation and leisure pursuits - shooting being perhaps the most obvious example. However, closely packed conifer plantations in remote areas were not entirely appropriate to this use and what was really needed was broadleaf woodlands closer to urban areas where people could use them. Forestry policy, therefore, began to be directed towards restoring existing woodland and encouraging planting of new broadleaf woodlands with a multipurpose aim. In 1993 the shift in the Government's forestry policy was clear and the FC claimed that: 'Forestry is now entering a new phase in which increasing emphasis is placed on social and environmental, as well as economic, benefits'. The CF

⁷⁷ NCC, Nature conservation and afforestation, (1986), p.82.

⁷⁸ William Wilkinson, NCC Chairman, *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

⁷⁹ 'Money that grows on trees', The Economist, 10/4/86, p.25.

⁸⁰ Carol Ferguson & Andrew Morgan, 'Tree-planting investment tax loophole is abolished', The Times, 16/3/88.

programme, said the FC, is one of the vehicles for encouraging new woodlands close to areas of population.⁸¹

URBAN PRESSURE

The rural band surrounding towns and cities is an arena in which several significant interest groups confront each other. These are land investors, farmers, speculative housebuilders and conservationists, and historically, according to Peter Ambrose, the often contradictory demands of these four groups have been managed through planners.⁸² It is the planning system involving this group and through which the expansion of towns and cities is controlled, that is the focus of attention here.

Controlling the spread of towns and cities has long been a problem for countries with a high urban population like England. The best known solution is the Green Belt policy first enacted for London in the 1938 London County Council Green Belt Act, and extended to other local planning authorities in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act.⁸³ According to Nan Fairbrother, 'London's Green Belt was the prototype with three stated purposes - to enclose the main built-up mass of London and prevent further spread; to keep country towns beyond the Green Belt as distinct and separate entities; [and] to preserve the fine countryside of the Home Counties'.⁸⁴

The importance of the Green Belt cannot be overstated; however, it is only one aspect of the planning system. Planning is primarily the responsibility of local authorities whose 'Structure plans', 'Local plans' and, in Metropolitan and London boroughs, 'unitary development plans', identify areas for development and conservation, enabling the process of development in any given area to be controlled.⁸⁵ There have been critics of the planning system and housebuilders in particular have argued that the rate of release of land for housing has been slow, raising the price of land for house building and forcing house prices to

⁸¹ FC, Forestry Policy for Great Britain, (Edinburgh: FC, 1993), pp.9 & 13.

⁸² Peter Ambrose, Whatever Happened to Planning?, (London: Methuen, 1986), p.186.

⁸³ Ibid., p.200.

⁸⁴ Nan Fairbrother, New Lives, New Landscapes, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p.182.

⁸⁵ Tony Byrne, Local Government in Britain, 4th Edition, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p.65.

arbitrarily high levels. However, since 1979 there has been a distinctive move towards free market principles and a weakening of the planning system.⁸⁶

Other social and economic changes have also affected the approach to development in the urban fringe. A shift in attitudes and lifestyles, together with technological improvements, has led to the redistribution of employment and economic activity towards smaller towns and rural areas.⁸⁷ High technology industries like computing and information technology are often built in more pleasant and cheaper greenfield areas. The same is true for out-of-town superstores, and the offer of greenfield sites is a major attraction for inward investors like foreign car manufacturers. It is also true that the massive increase in car ownership over recent years has made these new patterns of living more viable.

Arguably, however, there remains a disturbed landscape of industry and urban-marginal farming around built-up areas 'like the pale fringe round an ink spot on blotting paper'.⁸⁸ The unbalanced development pattern of the last two hundred years has meant that the 'pale fringe' is at its most conspicuous around the industrial towns and cities, mainly in the north of England, which grew up around the coal, steel and allied heavy industries like shipbuilding.⁸⁹ However, significant changes in the structure of industry in the UK in recent decades has led to a decline in manufacturing in these localities and the appearance of large areas of derelict land on the margins of many towns and cities. In the early 1970s, for example, as much as a quarter of all land was derelict in some parts of the North, the North Midlands, and South Wales.⁹⁰ The picture was little changed a decade later when the North of England

⁸⁶ John Bradbeer, for example, suggests that 'land use planning...became an early target for the government's zeal for deregulation and reliance on market forces'. 'Environmental Policy: Past and Future Agendas', in Savage, Atkinson & Robbins (Eds), Public Policy in Britain, (1994), p.122.

⁸⁷ John Blunden & Nigel Curry (Eds), The Changing Countryside, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p.97. Also David Keeble, 'Small firm creation, innovation and growth and the urban-rural shift', James Curran & David Storey (Eds), Small Firms in Urban and Rural Locations, (London: Routledge, 1993), p.54-59.

⁸⁸ This observation, made by Fairbrother, continues to be relevant, New Lives, (1972), p.190.

⁸⁹ Ambrose, for example, says that urban/industrial growth resulted in 'the crowding of 30 to 40 % of the population of Britain on the coalfield regions, which are something like 10% of the area'. Whatever Happened to Planning?, (1986), p.179.

⁹⁰ Fairbrother, New Lives, (1972), p.109.

County Councils Association noted that there was as much derelict land in the Region as there was in 1974.⁹¹

Establishing woodland on the boundaries between town and country to control urban expansion was suggested in the 1970s as a practical application of the Green Belt policy. Nan Fairbrother, for example, made the important point that 'trees commit the land to nothing: they save it from casual development without sterilizing it for further use'.⁹² The aims of multipurpose forestry and the CF initiative are perhaps a reflection of this view, although in somewhat extended form. They offer a variety of new opportunities to farmers, forestry interests and conservationists, and will contribute to the restoration of derelict land and increase tree cover.⁹³ In doing so, it is hoped that the new Forests will 'improve an area's economic prospects by "greening" its image, help to attract new investment and provide an attractive setting for a thriving local economy'.⁹⁴

Despite the attempt to satisfy the many interests operating in the urban fringe exhibited by multipurpose forestry policy and the CF programme, some conflict, nevertheless, remains. One of the major uses of the Forests is likely to be recreation and leisure pursuits, particularly for the income that it can produce.⁹⁵ People in urban areas commonly make use of the rural fringe for recreation and leisure, whether it be formal activities like sports and other organised pursuits or informal ones like picknicking and walking.⁹⁶ Formal recreational use of CF areas has raised concerns about a potential relaxation of planning controls and increased development. The Avon Wildlife Trust, for example, is concerned about breaches of planning regulations through the manipulation of recreation and leisure proposals 'endorsing development

⁹¹ North of England County Councils Association, The State of the Region Report 1982, para.4.28, p.22.

⁹² Fairbrother, New Lives, (1972), p.318.

⁹³ Tree cover is often low in areas previously dominated by heavy industry because of the use of timber for smelting, pit-props and so on.

⁹⁴ CC, Forests for the Community, [CCP 340], (London: CC, 1991).

⁹⁵ Blunden & Curry note that the most common after-use for derelict land is for leisure. The Changing Countryside, (1985), p.111.

⁹⁶ A.S.Mather, Land Use, (Harlow: Longman, 1986), p.143.

in areas that otherwise would not have any chance of success'.⁹⁷ Noting the wide variety of sporting facilities envisaged for Forest areas - dry ski slopes, sports stadia, ice rinks, and the like - the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) has also expressed concern that CFs 'may become a vehicle for pushing aside existing planning policies'.⁹⁸

Conversely, informal recreational activities require a high degree of public access to the land. However, access beyond that which already exists in the form of Public Rights of Way, is specifically excluded by the 'Statement of Understanding' drawn up by the CC and FC for farmers and landowners.⁹⁹ Moreover, some potential uses of land in Forest areas are inimical to public access. For example, coppicing and the growing of Christmas trees allow no more access than a field of cabbages, and there are practical difficulties associated with public access to areas reserved for game shooting.¹⁰⁰

Concerns have also been expressed that planning regulations in the CFs may be relaxed allowing farmers to regenerate old farm buildings, and make way for other developments.¹⁰¹ Worries about planning deals have led the CPRE to suggest that 'landowners and local authorities will conclude planning gain "deals", planting trees only where planning permission for otherwise unacceptable development is also granted'.¹⁰² Moreover, the FoE claim that land speculation may pose a problem because urban fringe landowners might prefer to wait for the Forests to be established before taking advantage of potentially more profitable building development.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Avon Wildlife Trust, quoted in Peter Brimacombe, 'They have branches everywhere', The Daily Telegraph, 23/2/91.

⁹⁸ Martin Elson, 'Community Forest Charter', ECOS, (1991), Vol.12, No.4, p.64.

⁹⁹ A copy of the 'Farmers, Landowners and Community Forests: Statement of Understanding' appears in the CC's Farming in Community Forests, (1993), pp.3-4.

¹⁰⁰ 'Money in the trees', The Economist, 28/9/85.

¹⁰¹ The FoE suggest that this may simply be a way of releasing agricultural land for other forms of development. Set-Aside - Money for Nothing, (1993), p.4.

¹⁰² Elson, 'Community Forest Charter', ECOS, (1991), p.64.

¹⁰³ The FoE suggest that there may be 'a hidden agenda to release agricultural land for other forms of development', Set-Aside - Money for Nothing, (1993), p.4.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Environmental concern underlies the debates about agricultural change, forestry policy and urban pressure which have been examined so far, and it is worth briefly reviewing those concerns together with the wider role that the environment plays in the CF programme in global, national and local terms.

Forestry is part of a broader undertaking towards sustainable development adopted by governments worldwide, and illustrated by the agreements made at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) at Rio de Janeiro in 1992.¹⁰⁴ Any increase in tree cover contributes directly towards the UNCED Agreement on Forest Principles, and it also contributes towards the Convention on Biological Diversity by strengthening and improving ecosystems, thereby protecting species.¹⁰⁵ Most importantly, forestry contributes to the Convention on Climate Change and, on this point, it can act in two ways. First, increasing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is considered to be one of the chief causes of the apparent rise in global temperatures and trees can act as a sink, consuming carbon dioxide through aspiration and storing it in their cellulose structure. Secondly, trees, particularly broadleaved trees, are a source of useful timber and raising domestic production of hardwoods could reduce the demand for imported timber from such environmentally fragile, yet highly exploited areas like the Amazon Basin and Indonesia.

At the national level there has been a significant increase in environmental awareness amongst the public. This is shown by the growth in membership of environmental organisations in recent decades and by opinion polls which suggest that many people now consider themselves environmentally aware.¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, there has been a great deal of public concern about the consequences for the environment of the intensive agricultural practices promoted by the CAP. Public disquiet also preceded changes to the forestry practices which encouraged

¹⁰⁴ Details of the agreements made at the UNCED Conference are given in Grubb, Koch, Munson, Sullivan & Thomson, The Earth Summit Agreements, (1993), p.xv.

¹⁰⁵ The Forestry Commission have initiated a project of work towards improving biodiversity in managed forests, for example. FC, Forestry Review: Highlights from the Forestry Commission Annual Report 1992-1993, (London: HMSO, February 1994), p.6.

¹⁰⁶ Garner, Environmental Politics, (1996), p.64.

environmentally damaging large scale conifer planting. Moreover, it is clear that a better understanding of the environment has contributed to 'a far greater recognition of the interdependence of environmental problems' amongst the public and environmental groups.¹⁰⁷

Arguably, there has always been interest in and concern about the environment at the local level. Environmental degradation is obvious to those who live alongside it and the environment and conservation are important factors in local planning and central to the Green Belt policy. Restoration of derelict land, the aftermath of industrial decline, is perhaps the best example of how the CF initiative could help in improving a community's immediate environment. According to the CC, the CFs will provide a 'better place to live and work'; act 'as a giant air conditioning system, soaking up pollution and releasing oxygen back into the atmosphere'; they will be havens for wildlife and offer 'new environments for leisure'.¹⁰⁸ In addition, there is a local dimension to the CF initiative which, because of its community nature, attempts to encourage people in Forest areas to participate in a development from which they will ultimately benefit.

2.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY FOREST PROGRAMME

Examination of the process which led to the CF programme shows it to be the result of the interaction of a large number of groups with widely differing interests. However, the focus of this thesis is the organisation of those groups to bring the CFs into existence. For this, the participants, the aims and objectives of the initiative and the incentives required to move it forward must be identified. Moreover, the arrangement of these features - how they are combined to form a cohesive whole - must be considered, and of specific interest are the participating public sector bodies which have primary responsibility for guiding the initiative to a successful conclusion.

THE PARTICIPANTS

There are many partners to the CF initiative and although they will vary slightly with each Forest project (the participating local councils

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.66.

¹⁰⁸ CC, Forests for the Community, (1991).

will differ, for example), broadly speaking they will be as follows:

the national partners - the CC and FC;

central government - the DoE (now the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, DETR) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF);

national agencies - English Nature, Sports Council and English Heritage;

local government - local authorities and parish councils;

farmers and landowners - Country Landowners Association (CLA), the National Farmers Union (NFU), and individual farmers and owners;

the business community - forestry and timber companies, and local businesses;

the voluntary sector - environmental groups, interest groups, schools and educational institutions, community groups and local people.¹⁰⁹

This extensive, though not exhaustive, list includes a large proportion of public sector bodies but however separate and autonomous they appear, listing them in this way disguises the variations in their character and the complex web of relationships and responsibilities that exists between them. It is, therefore, worth considering each of them in more detail.

The first three groups of participants listed are government departments and their agencies and are 'the main instruments for implementing government policy when Parliament has passed the necessary legislation'.¹¹⁰ Whilst this may be true, it is important to deal with departments and agencies separately since they clearly have different structures of accountability. The DETR is the government department with responsibility for the environment and for local government.¹¹¹ The MAFF is the department responsible for policies of agriculture, horticulture and fisheries; food safety and quality; some negotiations with the EU on Common Agricultural and Fisheries Policies; and some rural matters, like the enhancement of the countryside.¹¹² Both departments are headed by Cabinet Ministers who, by convention are responsible for the actions of those departments of state and accountable to Parliament for them.

The FC is the government department responsible for forestry

¹⁰⁹ GNF, Forest Plan: Executive Summary, (Chester-le-Street: GNF, 1994), p.13.

¹¹⁰ Central Office of Information (COI), The British System of Government, 3rd Edition, (London: The Stationery Office, 1996), p.49-50.

¹¹¹ Cabinet Office, The Civil Service Year Book 1996, (London: HMSO, 1995), col.220.

¹¹² Ibid., col.37.

throughout Great Britain. However, the FC differs from most departments because it 'has a Chairman and Board of Commissioners with statutorily prescribed duties and powers'.¹¹³ The Commissioners report directly to Forestry Ministers, namely the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales. Moreover, the FC was restructured in 1991, separating its roles and responsibilities. The Forest Authority now provides advice and sets standards for the industry, administers grant aid schemes for private woodlands, and so on. The Forest Enterprise is responsible for managing the Commission's forestry estate and, since 1994 has operated as an Executive Agency.

Executive Agencies arose from the Next Steps programme launched in 1988.¹¹⁴ The programme was an attempt to improve efficiency and management in government by 'hiving-off' some executive functions of government to agencies operating at arms-length from government departments and headed by a Chief Executive. Ministers remain responsible for policy, but it is the Chief Executive who is personally responsible for the day-to-day operations of the agency.¹¹⁵ Regarding the Forest Enterprise arm of the FC, the Chief Executive is 'responsible for day-to-day management of the Forest Estate...within a framework of policy objectives and resources set out in a framework document'.¹¹⁶

The CC, as the other national partner to the CF initiative, is the government body responsible for conserving and enhancing the beauty of the English countryside, and helping people to enjoy it.¹¹⁷ It is a non-departmental public body (NDPB), that is 'a body which has a role in the process of national government, but is not a government department or part of one, and accordingly operates to a greater or lesser extent

¹¹³ Ibid., col.316.

¹¹⁴ Efficiency Unit, Improving Management in Government: The Next Steps, The Ibbs Report, (London: HMSO, 1988).

¹¹⁵ This is the position according to the Government's COI, The British System of Government, (1996), p.62. However, it must be remembered that this, apparently simple, line of accountability remains unclear. For example, the Ibbs Report clearly states that: 'For agencies which are government departments or parts of departments ultimate accountability for operations must also rest with Ministers'. Improving Management in Government, (1988), Annex A, p.17.

¹¹⁶ Cabinet Office, The Civil Service Year Book 1996, (1995), col.318.

¹¹⁷ Cabinet Office, The Civil Service Year Book 1994, (London: HMSO, 1994), col.743.

at arms length from Ministers'.¹¹⁸ The CC is a NDPB of the executive type whose sponsoring department is the DoE (now the DETR).¹¹⁹ English Nature is also an executive type NDPB sponsored by the DoE (now the DETR),¹²⁰ and advises government on nature conservation in England.¹²¹ The Sports Council 'is responsible for developing sports and physical recreation'¹²² and English Heritage is 'devoted to the conservation and preservation of England's inheritance of ancient monuments and historic buildings'.¹²³ Both are executive type NDPBs sponsored by the Department of National Heritage (DNH).¹²⁴ The DNH is, therefore, a further government department linked to the CF initiative through the Sports Council and English Heritage. It has responsibility for a range of cultural policies including the arts, sport, the National Lottery, museums and galleries, libraries, architectural and archaeological heritage and tourism.¹²⁵

Each CF requires the cooperation of the local councils in the relevant areas. Local government can be defined as 'self-government involving the administration of public affairs in each locality by a body of representatives of the local community'.¹²⁶ These bodies are multipurpose and have a wide range of duties in local affairs, possessing considerable responsibility and discretionary power, they are ultimately responsible to the DETR and subordinate to Parliament. For historical reasons there is no uniform pattern of local government structure in England. Generally, two principal tiers exist, an upper tier of county

¹¹⁸ Cabinet Office, Office of Public Service and Science (OPSS), Public Bodies 1994, (London: HMSO, 1995), para.5, p.v.

¹¹⁹ Executive bodies 'normally employ staff and have their own budget, but in a few cases bodies are included which exercise administrative or regulatory functions in their own name but are supported by staff supplied by the sponsoring department'. Ibid., pp.v & 14.

¹²⁰ Cabinet Office, Office of Public Service (OPS), Public Bodies 1995, (London: HMSO, 1995), p.12.

¹²¹ Cabinet Office, The Civil Service Year Book 1996, (1995), col.756.

¹²² Ibid., cols.794-5.

¹²³ Ibid., col.756.

¹²⁴ Cabinet Office, OPS, Public Bodies 1995, (1995), p.30.

¹²⁵ Cabinet Office, The Civil Service Year Book 1996, (1995), col.496.

¹²⁶ Byrne, Local Government, (1986), pp.1-2.

councils and a lower tier district councils (often called city or borough councils). In non-metropolitan areas parish councils make up a third tier, however, in general in metropolitan areas only one tier exists.¹²⁷

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Identifying and defining goals and objectives in the public sector is manifestly difficult because of the absence of the profit motive. The aims of public bodies are frequently more numerous and diverse than the aims of private companies and this is also true of the CF programme. The initiative is part of the multipurpose forestry policy and aims to alter the pattern of afforestation in England. In general an increase in lowland broadleaf woodland is sought, with the emphasis on obtaining multiple benefits from forestry rather than viewing it simply as a means of producing timber. This will contribute towards the Government's policy of expanding woodland in the lowlands by increasing the level of tree cover in the Forest areas from 6.9% to about 30% over 30 years or so.¹²⁸ In turn the CFs will build upon the Government's broader commitment to sustainable development.

To properly understand the CF programme it is important to consider the more specific goals and objectives that have been established for it. The 'single aim' is 'to develop multipurpose forests which will create better environments for people to use, cherish and enjoy'.¹²⁹ A more comprehensive version reads:

The aim of the national programme of Community Forests is to achieve major environmental improvements around towns and cities, creating beautiful areas rich in wildlife, with associated provision for access, leisure and education; thereby making them more attractive places in which to live, do business and enjoy leisure time.¹³⁰

This might be referred to as the goal of the programme, that is, 'the higher level of activity which may be general in nature and the

¹²⁷ David Wilson & Chris Game, with Steve Leach & Gerry Stoker, Local Government in the United Kingdom, (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp.61-62.

¹²⁸ CC, Community Forests: Briefing Document, (Cheltenham: CC, 1995), para.1.15, p.5.

¹²⁹ Ibid., para.1.8, p.3.

¹³⁰ Ibid., para.10, p.13.

responsibility of the highest levels of management'.¹³¹ Objectives are more specific and measurable activities which are the responsibility of lower levels in the management hierarchy.¹³² A number of general objectives have been identified for each individual CF to adopt and are:

- i. To regenerate the environment of the Green Belt and equivalent areas, where it is public policy to keep it open, and help ensure that it is permanently green and open;
- ii. To improve the landscape of the area, including reclamation of derelict land, to create a visually exciting and functionally diverse environment;
- iii. To increase opportunities for sport and recreation, including artistic and cultural events, and access;
- iv. To protect areas of high quality landscape or historical or archaeological interest;
- v. To protect sites of nature conservation value and create new opportunities for nature conservation;
- vi. To provide new opportunities for educational use of the area, and ensure the mosaic of habitats in the forest can be used for the full range of environmental education needs of the surrounding schools. Also to ensure that urban schools are not disadvantaged in meeting the needs of the National Curriculum;
- vii. To protect the best agricultural land and increase opportunities for farm diversification elsewhere in accordance with Government agricultural and local planning policies;
- viii. To establish a supply of local timber and other woodland products;
- ix. To achieve a high level of community commitment to the concept and involvement in its implementation;
- x. To give private and public sector confidence in the long-term prospects of the area and to provide a proper base for investment. To improve the environment near housing and local industry and to increase the value of properties and businesses;
- xi. To seek private sector support to implement the forest and to invest in leisure and other relevant service sectors;
- xii. To create jobs in the new woodland industries, both management of woodland and use of the raw materials. To create jobs in the leisure industry developed in and around the Community Forest. To sustain other local jobs by providing an outstanding environment as a comparative economic advantage over competitor areas;
- xiii. To complement the Government's priorities for inner cities, by providing for associated leisure and open space needs at the physically closest locations; and

¹³¹ Richard A. Chapman, 'Efficiency and Effectiveness in the Civil Service', Evidence taken before the Expenditure Committee (General Sub-Committee), Vol.3, Appendix 25, (London: HMSO, 1977), p.957.

¹³² Ibid., p.957.

xiv. To remain flexible in the light of changes, such as in the leisure market.¹³³

It should, however, be noted that the objectives vary in number, wording and emphasis according to the document consulted. For example, The 1994 Forest Plan for the GNF gives eleven objectives; a CC Briefing Document, published in 1995, gives twelve objectives and fourteen 'corporate' objectives; and the CC's 1998 Monitoring Report gives thirteen.¹³⁴

INSTRUMENTS FOR CHANGE

It is argued that the UK Government's approach towards environmental policy is tolerant and unassertive.¹³⁵ Realisation of sustainable development, relies on providing the appropriate and necessary environmental information for the public to base their decision on, combined with market mechanisms to encourage behavioural changes in favour of the environment.¹³⁶ The CF initiative is broadly in line with this approach and the Statement of Understanding, drawn up to clarify the position of farmers and landowners, highlights the voluntary nature of the initiative. Moreover, compulsory purchase of land is ruled out, the agreement of landlords and tenants must be obtained before planting is carried out, and there is no change in the legal position regarding public access to land.¹³⁷ The 'main approach', therefore, 'will be to encourage farmers, landowners and businesses to consider the opportunities which the community forests might represent'.¹³⁸

The GNF literature defines three 'mechanisms' - persuasion, purchase and planning - through which the establishment of the Forest

¹³³ CC, Community Forests: Briefing Document, (1995), para.10, pp.14-15.

¹³⁴ See GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.3.9, p.12; CC, Community Forests: Briefing Document, (1995), para.1.9, pp.3-4 & Section 10, pp.13-14; and Report prepared by ENTEC for CC & FC, Community Forest Programme: Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (Cheltenham: CC, 1998), Appendix C, pp.1-2.

¹³⁵ Neil Carter & Phillip Lowe, for example, claim that environmental control in Britain is 'pervaded by administrative rather than judicial procedures; is informal, accommodative and technocratic'. In dealing with private concerns, they say, the approach is 'voluntarist', 'seeks to foster cooperation' and leans heavily on 'negotiation and persuasion' to achieve objectives. Implementation is preferably through 'consent', self-regulation' and informal agreement'. 'Environmental Politics and Administrative Reform', Political Quarterly, (1994), Vol.65, pp.265-266.

¹³⁶ DoE, This Common Inheritance, (1990).

¹³⁷ CC, Farming in the Community Forests, (1993), pp.2-3.

¹³⁸ CC, Community Forests: Briefing Document, (1995), para.1.10, p.4.

will be pursued. Advice, grants and agreements will be used to persuade farmers, landowners and others to convert their land to forestry. Some land will be purchased 'to secure direct control through ownership', and then turned over to forestry; and planning agreements and conditions will ensure that forestry becomes one of the considerations for new developments.¹³⁹ Clearly all these mechanisms will play a role in the Forest's development, but perhaps the most important mechanism for persuading people in the Forest areas to establish woodland and develop their land in concert with the aims of multipurpose forestry is the use of economic instruments.

Although this is a community policy, market mechanisms will also be applied to the improvement of the environment. These are economic instruments and mainly consist of the range of grants that are available from various government bodies to support groups that contribute towards the objectives laid down for the CFs. The most important grants are those which encourage the planting of woodland and include the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) administered through the FC's Forestry Authority, and available to farmers and landowners to support the establishment, regeneration and management of woodlands over 0.25 hectares; and the Farm Woodland Scheme (FWS), administered by the MAFF and aimed at supporting the establishment of woodlands over 0.5 hectares.

Numerous other grants are available to support different aspects of the Forest development. In addition to the FWS, for example, MAFF is responsible for administering the Farm and Conservation Scheme to help farmers with the capital costs of maintaining efficient farming systems, pollution control and countryside conservation. The DETR, through the CC, is responsible for the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, available for conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats, landscape and archaeological features; the Landscape Conservation Scheme and Recreation Grants. As the sponsoring department for English Nature, the DETR is also responsible for awarding Project Grants. The DNH, through English Heritage, is responsible for Historic Building Grants, Ancient Monument Grants, and, through the Sports Council, administers various grants for the provision of sports facilities. The Rural Development Commission (RDC), the 'Government agency tasked with promoting the well being of

¹³⁹ GNF, Executive Summary, (1994), p.13.

communities in the rural areas of England',¹⁴⁰ administers the Redundant Building Grant. Also worth noting are Training and New Enterprise Grants for business training.¹⁴¹ These are administered by Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), set up in 1988 and under the general supervision of the DfEE with members drawn from local authorities, private companies, unions and voluntary bodies.¹⁴² It must be remembered that this is not an exhaustive list of grants and others offered by Government include those which are obtained through bids made to the Lottery and Millennium Commissions.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The complex pattern of organisation developed for implementing the CFs is a consequence of the multipurpose nature of the programme, its scale and inclusiveness. First, the initiative cuts across the responsibilities of several government departments and agencies which provide grants, advice and other services. Responsibility for administration of the initiative cannot, therefore, easily be assigned to any single government body. Secondly, the administrators of the CFs must be responsive to their community and elicit support from that community. Yet, by spanning local government boundaries, individual CFs are geographically too large for any single local authority to administer.¹⁴³ Finally, although the public sector has a major part to play in the CF initiative, it is a partnership which also incorporates organisations from the private and voluntary sectors. Administration of the programme is, therefore, not a simple matter because there are many participants and contributors, and no existing central or local government body in England which could legitimately and satisfactorily undertake this duty.

The solution is that twelve 'ad hoc' or, single purpose,

¹⁴⁰ Cabinet Office, The Civil Service Year Book 1997, (London: The Stationery Office, 1997), col.813.

¹⁴¹ CC, Community Forests: Briefing Document, (1995), paras.1.11-1.12, p.4; & CC, Farming in the Community Forests, (1993), pp.10-11.

¹⁴² Michael Dynes & David Walker, The Times Guide to the New British State: The Government Machine in the 1990s, (London: Times Books, 1995), p.195.

¹⁴³ There are possible exceptions to this, but in most cases it holds true. See CC, Community Forests: Briefing Document, (1995), pp.10-13.

organisations have been established, each with the single aim of developing their own CF. These organisations are unusual and can be described as quasi-governmental bodies, representing a functional decentralisation, or hiving off of services and functions, both from central and local government.¹⁴⁴ They also combine some of the features of joint arrangements which exist either for the coordination of services spanning more than one local authority (joint boards); or for implementing projects that involve participants from a number of public and private sector bodies (mixed joint committees).¹⁴⁵

Each CF is administered by a formal organisation¹⁴⁶ centred around a Project Team appointed by the Forestry and Countryside Commissions in partnership with the relevant local authorities. Supporting groups, or committees, served by local councillors, council officers and representatives from the CC, FC and other participating bodies, have also been formally established to advise and steer the Project Teams. The formal organisation is internally complex with staff or membership made up of appointees representing participating public, private and voluntary bodies. Moreover the limits of the formal organisation are not easy to define because there are a wide range of bodies that are not properly members, yet have a role in each Project. For example, the DNH has indirect responsibility through the Sports Council and English Heritage; and the RDC and TECs provide grants for the programme but are not represented in the formal organisation. Therefore, the formal organisation tends to blend into a wider and more diffuse organisation and, in this sense, it is more of a network of interconnected and interrelated organisations centred around the formal organisation. This extended organisational structure is akin to what Tom

¹⁴⁴ Byrne uses functional decentralisation to describe decentralisation from central government, Local Government in Britain, (1986), p.1. Whereas Christopher Stevens uses the term to describe the way that local authority functions have been moved closer to the public 'ostensibly on a territorial basis, but in reality by splitting different functions...and delegating them to the private sector, ad hoc boards, the voluntary sector, quasi-democratic units and quangos'. 'The Politics of Decentralisation', Teaching Public Administration, (1994), Vol.15, No.2, p.2.

¹⁴⁵ Gerry Stoker gives the examples of Police services which are coordinated through joint boards, and the Glasgow Eastern Area Renewal project administered by a mixed joint committee. The Politics of Local Government, 2nd Edition, (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp.75-78.

¹⁴⁶ Peter M. Blau & Richard Scott have defined formal organisations as those organisation 'formally established for the explicit purpose of achieving certain goals'. Formal Organisations: A Comparative Approach, (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1964), p.5.

Burns and G.M.Stalker described as an organic system, rather than a mechanistic system based on traditional bureaucratic principles derived from Max Weber's ideal-type.¹⁴⁷ Although Burns' and Stalker's research concerned the internal workings of a single organisation, the term could equally apply to the way the many participating organisations interact with one another in the administration of the CFs.

There are limits to the amount of decentralisation and flexibility possible in the public sector organisations. The 'fundamental dilemma' of decentralisation, according to Elcock, 'is between allowing local discretion and thus giving scope for service providers to be more accessible, responsive and creative, and maintaining sufficient central control to ensure efficiency and protect equity'.¹⁴⁸ Regarding flexibility, Stewart Ranson and John Stewart point out that the 'public organization cannot be wholly organic because it has to act as a vehicle for imposing collective will'.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, public organisations are constrained by the law and can only do what they have been specifically given the powers to do. Despite these natural limits, the implementation of the CFs must be as decentralised and flexible as possible to satisfy community expectations, yet the greater this is achieved, the more difficult coordination and control of the project is and the less clear accountability becomes.

2.4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE COMMUNITY FOREST PROGRAMME

In this chapter the process which led to the CF programme and the way in which the many groups are brought together to implement the initiative have been considered. Clearly the multipurpose forestry policy and CF programme are pluralist¹⁵⁰ and, although there is a significant

¹⁴⁷ Tom Burns & G.M.Stalker, The Management of Innovation, (London: Tavistock, 1961).

¹⁴⁸ Howard Elcock, Change and Decay? Public Administration in the 1990s, (Harlow: Longman, 1991), p.59.

¹⁴⁹ Stewart Ranson & John Stewart, 'Citizenship and Government: The Challenge for Management in the Public Domain', Political Studies, (1989), Vol.37, pp.21-22.

¹⁵⁰ Nelson Polsby defines pluralism as having one or more of the following characteristics: 'dispersion of power among many rather than few participants in decision-making; competition or conflict among political leaders; specialisation of leaders to relatively restricted sets of issue areas; bargaining rather than hierarchical decision-making; election in which suffrage is relatively widespread as a major determinant of participation in key decisions; bases of influence over decisions relatively dispersed rather than closely held; and so on'. Community Power and Political Theory, [1963], 2nd Edition, (Yale University Press, 1980), p.154.

role for the public sector, many private and voluntary groups are also involved. The programme attempts to compromise the varying and often contradictory interests by providing multiple aims and involving the participating groups in decision making and implementation. Each CF is separately developed by a formal organisation centred around a Project Team supported by advisory and steering groups or committees. These ad hoc or single purpose bodies have similarities with joint boards and mixed joint committees, and enable the coordinating of projects which span several local authority areas and involve many participants. Not all participants or contributors have a role in the formal organisation but they may all be considered as part of the wider network.

Although some land will be bought for Forest use, the initiative is designed to proceed through voluntary and consensual means, involving the community but with reference to the market. This is administratively complex with a wide range of grants and other economic incentives dispensed by a number of government departments, agencies and other public bodies. In addition these public sector organisations provide advice and may arrange agreements with participating groups. Local authorities will also act as advisors and broker agreements, although their main role is perhaps in the field of planning.

This largely organic administrative structure appears to be particularly apt for the implementation of sustainable development because of its flexibility and the opportunity it provides to co-opt many different groups and interests. Coordination of such a varied and unwieldy organisation (the formal and wider organisation) may present difficulties for the Project Teams. However, it is control, specifically the formal control of administrative responsibility in the complex organisation, that presents most difficulty. The most obvious concern is who prevails in administrative decisions where the many participating groups compete to satisfy their own interests which may conflict with the goal or objectives of the initiative, or simply be imprudent. This raises important questions about accountability and responsibility in the organisation, and particularly amongst the public sector participants.

Responsibility is generally taken to mean the compass of authority to make decisions and act, and accountability the requirement to justify actions: accountability is, then, the enforcement of responsibility. The notions of accountability and responsibility have a special place in the

process of government in the UK because of the absence of a written constitution. The system relies on the conventions that Ministers are both 'collectively responsible to Parliament for the general conduct of the affairs of the country', and 'individually responsible to Parliament for the conduct of their departments'.¹⁵¹ However, in the case of the CF programme Ministers are distant from the formal organisation and it may not be practical for them to be responsible for day-to-day operation. Neither is the formal organisation part of elected local government and there are many other participating public sector bodies, none of which have overall responsibility. Moreover, since the formal organisation is composed of representatives from several government and private and voluntary bodies, its status is far from clear. A key question for this study is how administrative responsibility is built in to the organisational and management structure, and how this fits into the democratic system of the UK.

Concern about political responsibility in Britain is a 20th Century phenomenon, according to A.H.Birch. Only after reform of the representative systems of government had been achieved in the 19th Century, was attention turned to 'the significance of the conventions of ministerial responsibility and the reality of Parliamentary control of the executive', he says.¹⁵² However, the structural and management changes of the last few decades have done much to change the political landscape and heighten the debate. Responsibility and accountability were clearly defined in traditional bureaucracies where, at its most rational, staff would 'only observe the impersonal duties of their offices', there would be 'a clear hierarchy of offices', and the 'functions of the offices [would be] clearly specified'.¹⁵³

The structure of the public sector has been significantly altered by the 'hiving off' of specific government activities which can be traced back to recommendations made in the Report of the Fulton Committee on the

¹⁵¹ Here responsible 'does not mean morally responsible or culpable, but accountable or answerable'. O.Hood Phillips & Paul Jackson, O.Hood Phillips' Constitutional and Administrative Law, 7th Edition, (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1987), pp.125, 126 & 309.

¹⁵² A.H.Birch, Representative and Responsible Government: An Essay on the British Constitution, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), p.237.

¹⁵³ Max Weber, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft [1946], quoted in Martin Albrow, Bureaucracy, (London: Macmillan, 1970), p.44.

Civil Service published in 1968.¹⁵⁴ Concerns have consistently been voiced since about the number of QUANGOs and the amount of administration undertaken by them.¹⁵⁵ However, the hiving off process was formalised and extended by the Next Steps initiative in 1988 and has been progressively implemented since.

In addition, the style of management in the Civil Service has altered with the introduction of business methods and the emphasis on accountability for performance.¹⁵⁶ The most significant statement about the application of performance measurement at all levels of government appeared in the White Paper which launched the Financial Management Initiative (FMI) in 1982. This aimed:

- to promote in each department an organization and system in which managers at all levels have:
- a. a clear view of their objectives and means to assess and, wherever possible, measure outputs or performances in relation to those objectives;
 - b. well-defined responsibility for making the best use of their resources including a critical scrutiny of output and value for money; and
 - c. the information (particularly about costs), the training and the access to expert advice they need to exercise their responsibilities effectively.¹⁵⁷

Hiving off government activities to unelected quasi-governmental bodies which operate at arms length from ministers and elected local government, and the emphasis on accountability for performance are, arguably, the result of government becoming too complex for responsibility for the work of a department to lie entirely with accountable Ministers alone. However, the rise of what Christopher Hood has called New Public Management (NPM), combined with the trend towards

¹⁵⁴ The Report recommended the establishment of accountable units within government departments 'where output can be measured against costs or other criteria, and where individuals can be held personally responsible for their performance'. Report of the Committee on the Civil Service, The Civil Service, The Fulton Report, [Cmd.3638], Vol.1, (London: HMSO, 1968), para.150.

¹⁵⁵ For example, Barker (Ed), Quangos in Britain, (1982), and F.F.Ridley & David Wilson, (Eds), The Quango Debate, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁵⁶ Christopher Hood, for example, suggests that one of the doctrines of new public management is explicit standards and measures of performance justified on the grounds that accountability requires a clear statement of goals and that efficiency requires attention to objectives. 'A Public Management for all Seasons?', Public Administration, (1991), Vol.69, No.1, p.4.

¹⁵⁷ Efficiency and Effectiveness in the Civil Service, Government Observations on the Third Report from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, [HC.236, Cmd.8616], (London: HMSO, 1982), para.13.

implementing public policy through partnership arrangements with the private and voluntary sectors as community policy, does little to reduce the complexity of the public sector.

Several difficulties with the administration of the CF programme can be suggested. First, functional decentralisation means that many of the public bodies are distant from central and local government, making lines of responsibility unclear. Secondly, there are numerous public bodies involved, all with designated responsibilities but none with overall responsibility. Thirdly, the partnership arrangement between public, private and voluntary organisations, blurs the public sector boundary. Clear and intelligible organisation is a fundamental requirement in public service and important questions must be raised about democratic accountability in these complex arrangements. Furthermore, the prospects for success of the CF programme, the achievement of its aims and objectives, must be in question when there is no one in overall control. This has wider implications for the implementation of sustainable development in other contexts. Accordingly, the next two chapters examine how accountability is built into the structure and management of one of the CF projects, the GNF, and considers its operation and questions its efficacy in such complex arrangements.

CHAPTER 3

THE GREAT NORTH FOREST: ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND TRADITIONAL METHODS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to examine in detail the form and structure of the organisation which has developed to implement the GNF. First, it will consider the formal organisation established explicitly for the purpose of achieving that goal. Secondly, the wider organisation, which is inextricably linked to the Project and which will play a significant part in achieving its goal, is explored. The roles and responsibilities of the many actors and the relationships between them are discussed. However, it is the accountability arrangements between the participating public bodies that are the main focus of attention, and the Chapter concludes by considering the role of hierarchical accountability, and its limitations in the Project. The discussion draws particular attention to the difficulties of identifying who is accountable and to whom they are accountable in this complex arrangement. This is of significant concern for a project which benefits from substantial financial support from the public sector, and especially so where the public, private and voluntary sectors work in close partnership.

3.2. THE FORMAL ORGANISATION

Participation in the development of the GNF is planned to be wide and diverse. The Forest Plan, for example, states that:

Its realisation will demand the committed support of key national and local bodies, together with all sections of the local community. Each has a role to play in forging and sustaining the working partnerships needed to carry the initiative to fruition over its long timescale.¹⁵⁸

However, the Forest is principally a partnership between the CC, the FC and the five local authorities which operate in the area, and these are considered first.

THE PRINCIPAL PARTNERS

There are five local authorities participating in the GNF Project (see Appendix 3).¹⁵⁹ Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC), South Tyneside MBC and the City of Sunderland Council are unitary or single-tier authorities. The remaining two are part of the two-tier local

¹⁵⁸ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.16.23, p.93.

¹⁵⁹ It should be noted that the Forest extends into the local authority areas of Derwentside, Durham City and Easington although they are not represented in the formal organisation.

government system and geographically overlap, so the Chester-le-Street District Council (DC) area of responsibility is contained within that of the Durham County Council area. As noted in Chapter 2, the CC is a NDPB responsible to the DETR and the FC is a government department.

The general organisational arrangement for the administration of the GNF was decided by the CC and FC when the initiative was launched in 1989.¹⁶⁰ However, the detailed structure of the Project Team and the relationships between the principal partners were formalised in a three year joint 'Memorandum of Understanding' on the establishment of the GNF in February 1990, and covering the provisional planning stage of the Project. This was followed in April 1993 by a joint 'Memorandum of Agreement', to cover a further three years during which time the final Forest Plan was published and implementation began. The main purpose of the Memorandum of Agreement was to

set out the detailed arrangements and agreements between the seven partner organisations for developing ways in which they will work individually and together to support the creation of the GNF.¹⁶¹

The memorandum has since been reviewed; however, the purpose and arrangements remain essentially unchanged as the longer-term process of implementation proceeds.

THE PROJECT TEAM

The focal point for the seven principal partners in the GNF initiative is a 'freestanding' Project Team¹⁶² which forms the core of the formal organisation. The staff are appointed from a number of participating bodies, mainly the principal partners, and paid by these bodies.¹⁶³ It is a coordinating body and its major role is 'to promote and support effective partnerships between the many agencies and organisations which will play a part in the complex jigsaw of

¹⁶⁰ Comment made by the GNF Project Director, John Vaughan, during interview in July 1995.

¹⁶¹ GNF, Members Steering Group Report of 21/10/92, p.1 and Annex 1, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', para 1.2, p.1.

¹⁶² GNF, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', para.5.1, p.5.

¹⁶³ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), paras.3.5-3.6, p.12.

implementing the Great North Forest'.¹⁶⁴ The specific objectives of the Project Team are to:-

- # prepare and implement a Forest Plan;
- # promote the Community Forest concept;
- # seek the cooperation, involvement and partnership of private owners, landowning and tenant farmers;
- # provide advice, expertise and access to grant aid;
- # secure adequate resources for the Great North Forest, including private sector funding and targeted grant aid;
- # involve and work with schools, local communities, voluntary groups and individuals; [and]
- # investigate planting techniques and costs to ensure effective establishment and management.¹⁶⁵

The Forest Plan

Of particular importance is the preparation of the Forest Plan, 'a non-statutory document setting out the agreed view and approach of the major partners to the future management of the countryside within...[the Forest] area'.¹⁶⁶ This document, published in January 1994 after a four month consultation period, represents the first step towards putting the Project into practice, providing details of anticipated developments which can be then incorporated into the structural and local plans prepared by the participating local authorities. The aims and objectives of the CF programme, identified in Chapter 2, are reaffirmed, but, importantly, the Forest Plan provides details of the many groups expected to be involved in the Project, and the roles and responsibilities that they will have in the complex process of developing the Forest.

The Team Members

As of 1994, the Project Team comprised the following members appointed by the partner local authorities: A Project Director, John Vaughan, employed by Gateshead MBC, whose role is to liaise with key agencies to encourage support, especially from business sources, and to deal with sponsorship. The Project Director is responsible to the Members

¹⁶⁴ GNF, Forest Advisory Forum Report, (26/7/94), para.10.

¹⁶⁵ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.3.4, pp.11-12.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., para.5.1, p.17.

Steering Group (see below) which directs the Project, and through the CC and FC to ministers in the DETR and MAFF who monitor the progress of the Project.¹⁶⁷ A **Project Development Manager**, Jon Clark, employed by Durham County Council, whose role is to coordinate the Project with farmers and landowners, conservation and recreation bodies, and to liaise with local authorities. A **Community Liaison Officer**, Chris Growcott, employed by South Tyneside MBC; an **Office Manager**, Christine Heppel, employed by City of Sunderland Council; and a **Community Forester**, Fraser Scott, dedicated and employed by the FC.¹⁶⁸ In addition, a number of other organisations have appointed staff to the Project Team. These include a **Community Woodland Officer** from the Woodland Trust; a **Project Officer** from the Tidy Britain Group;¹⁶⁹ a **Business Liaison Officer** on temporary secondment from the Department of Employment (since 1997, the Department for Education and Employment, DfEE); and a **Sport and Recreation Development Officer** is funded by the Sports Council.¹⁷⁰

Finance

The Project Team is not primarily a spending body. Its main function is to coordinate the many participating groups, providing advice and information to interested parties and bringing them together with the appropriate grant awarding bodies. The Project Team's budget is small and is used to support the organisation itself; however, some limited spending on other activities is permitted. In 1993-94, for example, the Project Director could spend up to £500 without endorsement from the Project partners on providing of information, supporting events, publicity, and conservation and recreation activities.¹⁷¹

The members of the Project Team are employed on a full-time basis

¹⁶⁷ Monitoring Reports are prepared annually for the FC & CC and presented to ministers. They provide details of the year's achievements against seven indicators identified by the DETR and MAFF, along with other relevant information. See, for example, ENTEC for CC & FC Community Forest Programme: Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998) p.2.

¹⁶⁸ GNF, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', para.5.2, p.5, & GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.3.5, p.12.

¹⁶⁹ The Tidy Britain Group is an independent charity funded by the DETR and the private sector which campaigns to improve the cleanliness and amenity value of public places in Britain.

¹⁷⁰ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.3.6, p.12 & Appendix F, p.112.

¹⁷¹ GNF, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', para.9.15, p.14.

by their appointing organisations, and the five participating local authorities and the CC contribute to the cost of running the Project Team's offices.¹⁷² This totalled £65,000 in the financial year 1993-4, with the local authorities contributing £32,500 in total (£6,500 each) and an equal amount of £32,500 from the CC. These amounts are adjusted each year to keep pace with inflation. The financial administrator is Gateshead MBC and spending in 1993-4 broke down as follows: office accommodation, and running costs (£35,000); publicity, information, training and minor research (£20,000); and assistance to local community groups, voluntary bodies and schools (£10,000).¹⁷³

The Future of the Project Team

The Project Team owes its existence to the Memorandum of Agreement and its continuation and the structure which it takes is dependent on the partners to that agreement and future agreements. The partners are not tied to the organisation and can terminate the contract with the Project at any time, giving 6 months notice.¹⁷⁴ The existing structure is intended to continue, although the organisation could become an independent charitable trust or a private company, or it could be replaced by a much more informal arrangement with the partners simply working to the Forest Plan. Future arrangements, it was said, would be the prerogative of the principal partners who 'need to agree which arrangement is most appropriate to the achievement of the Forest's objectives'.¹⁷⁵

STEERING AND ADVISORY BODIES

The Project Team is not an autonomous body and is directed and advised by a number of formal groups, or committees. These are important in their own right but are worth considering here for the insight they provide into the network of relationships which tie the Project together.

¹⁷² Although the Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96 states that the CC will grant aid of 50% of the agreed cost of employing each member of the Project Team, excluding the Community Forester who is sponsored by the FC. para.9.1, p.11.

¹⁷³ GNF, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', paras.9.3-9.6, p.11.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., para.12, p.16.

¹⁷⁵ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.17.11, p.101.

The Members Steering Group

The Members Steering Group (MSG) provides the main decision-making forum for the GNF and its role is to direct the Project.¹⁷⁶ The Group is comprised of two councillors from each of the five local authorities, and one representative from each of the FC, the CC, the CLA and the NFU. The Group meets on a quarterly basis to review the progress of the initiative and agree annual reports and business plans prepared by the Project Director.¹⁷⁷ Voting rights were restricted to local authority members who elected a chairman and vice-chairman from amongst their number on a rotational basis. Since 1996, this has been extended to all MSG members and the CC, the FC, the CLA and NFU are no longer limited to observer status. Regarding decision making in the Group, Vaughan commented that 'while they have a "show of hands" to agree recommendations on which they have been asked to make a decision, they have never yet needed to take a formal vote to resolve anything - it is generally a matter of consensus politics'.¹⁷⁸ This was confirmed by comments made by MSG members during interviews.

Each body has its own method of selecting elected councillors to sit on the MSG. With respect to local authorities, Vaughan said that 'some nominate individuals and others specify that it should be the Chair or Vice-chair of an appropriate committee'.¹⁷⁹ This was confirmed from interviews with local authority officers who claimed that councillors are normally chosen by the controlling group of the council (normally the Labour Party in these areas), except in the case of South Tyneside MBC where the Tyneside Development Department make the selection. The procedure is therefore one of appointment rather than election, based on the criteria that the chosen councillor should have an interest in environmental issues (they are often members of the relevant Environment Committee); that they are politically experienced; and that they have a degree of status in their local authority (they are often the Chair or Vice-chair of the Environment committee).

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., para.3.7, p.12.

¹⁷⁷ GNF, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', Section 8, pp.9-10.

¹⁷⁸ Letter from John Vaughan dated 19/5/95.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

The important thing about the MSG is that it provides a democratic element to the Project in two ways. First, it is the body on which locally elected councillors sit, thereby, it may be said, providing a democratic link with local people. However, as one Councillor pointed out, the MSG is not a local authority sub-committee and not fully controlled by them. Moreover, the Group is 'cosmetic' rather than democratic, he added, and the lack of control has presented some difficulties for local authorities. Secondly, the MSG provides for a democratic decision-making process via a voting system. Thus the Group has internal and external democratic features, although even when voting rights were restricted to elected councillors democratic accountability was weak and tenuous. Nevertheless, because of the, albeit limited, democratic accountability of the MSG, it is identified as the body accountable for the actions the Project Team.¹⁸⁰

The Officer Technical Group

The Officer Technical Group was established under the Memorandum of Understanding, 'to bring together technical officers from the project partners and officers from a number of agencies not represented on the Members Steering Group'.¹⁸¹ The role of the Officer Technical Group was to 'prepare plans, coordinate action amongst the principal partners and provide technical advice to the Project Team'.¹⁸² Membership consisted of nine local authority officers drawn from planning or environment departments (two officers from each participating local authority, except for Chester-le-Street DC which provided one); two representatives from the CC (a regional officer and a senior countryside officer who chaired the group); a FC representative (a regional technical adviser); an Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) representative from the MAFF; a regional adviser from the NFU; the Regional Secretary from the CLA; and representatives from each of the Northern Development Company, The Wearside Opportunity (both business development

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Vaughan, July 1995.

¹⁸¹ Letter from Vaughan, 19/5/95.

¹⁸² GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.3.8, p.12.

initiatives), English Nature and the Sports Council.¹⁸³ The Officer Technical Group was short lived; according to Vaughan: 'It served as a useful discussion forum during the preparation of the Forest Plan...[but it] eventually became apparent that many of its functions were more appropriately served by a developing Chief Officer Group...which was eventually formalised in the second Memorandum'.¹⁸⁴

The Chief Officer Group

The Chief Officer Group partly replaced the Officer Technical Group after the first three year provisional planning stage, as noted above, and was formalised in the Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96.¹⁸⁵ The role of this new group is to advise and direct the Project Director¹⁸⁶, particularly on the planning and environmental functions of the project.¹⁸⁷ The Chief Officer Group consists of one council officer from each of the participating local authorities, along with representatives from the FC and the CC. Meetings are held quarterly and are chaired by the CC representative.¹⁸⁸

The Forest Advisory Forum

The Forest Advisory Forum also evolved from the Officer Technical Group but has a wider membership. This includes English Nature and the Sports Council which were formerly represented on the Officer Technical Group, key voluntary sector organisations like the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and the Woodland Trust, and key community organisations like the CPRE and the Ramblers Association.¹⁸⁹ Its role is to 'bring together a wide range of public, private and voluntary bodies to review the work of the project and discuss key areas for future

¹⁸³ There are some discrepancies in the membership details of this group and this list is a compilation of information given in Vaughan's letter of 19/5/95, and GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), Appendix F, p.112.

¹⁸⁴ Letter from Vaughan, 19/5/95.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ GNF, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', para.8.2, p.10.

¹⁸⁷ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.3.8, p.12.

¹⁸⁸ GNF, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', para.8.2, p.10.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., para.8.3, p.10.

consideration'.¹⁹⁰ The work of the Forest Advisory Forum is aimed at specific aspects of implementation for which they advise relevant members of the Project Team. Meetings are held at least annually and are chaired by the CC and FC representatives in rotation.¹⁹¹

Working Groups and Bilateral Meetings

A number of working groups have been established to discuss specific aspects of the Project and to encourage broader involvement from those organisations not represented on the Chief Officer Group. For example, the Farm/Forestry Working Group deals specifically with the concerns of farmers and landowners; and the Conservation Working Group, restructured into the Countryside Working Group in 1995, brings together agencies responsible for implementing work related to countryside and conservation initiatives. The role of the Working Groups is to advise relevant members of the Project Team on particular aspects of implementation and membership varies accordingly. Bilateral meetings serve a similar purpose and, for example, are held with English Nature to acquire and exchange specific advice, in this instance, on nature conservation research.¹⁹²

The Project Directors Forum

The CF initiative is a national programme and is closely linked to the National Forest, currently being developed over some 194 square miles of countryside in the Midlands. It also has relevance for other national programmes, particularly those concerned with forestry, and countryside conservation and enhancement. A Project Directors Forum has been established to provide links between individual CFs, the National Forest and other national programmes. It meets quarterly and is attended by the Project Directors of the twelve CFs and the National Forest, senior representatives from the CC and FC, members of the CC's Community Forest Unit, the MAFF's national officer responsible for CFs, amongst others. According to John Vaughan:

The Forum combines a business meeting, covering matters of direct relevance to the national

¹⁹⁰ GNF, Forest Advisory Forum Report, (26/7/94), para.12.

¹⁹¹ See GNF, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', para.8.3, p.10, and Vaughan's letter of 19/5/95.

¹⁹² Letter from Vaughan, 19/5/95.

partnership (grants, national policy, research, training, PR [Public Relations], and marketing etc.) with seminars, briefings and training sessions on key issues (EC funding, Countryside Stewardship, monitoring and evaluation, the National Lottery etc.) over two days.¹⁹³

The Project Directors Forum plays a role in the national policy-making process. For example, it made representations to the 'forestry review group', set up by the Secretary of State for Scotland in 1993 to consider the effectiveness of incentives for forestry, ownership and management of FC woodland and the delivery of the Government's forestry policy.¹⁹⁴

3.4. THE WIDER ORGANISATION

As Peter Blau and Richard Scott observed in 1963: 'Formal organisations are associated with diverse publics' which span 'the larger society in its capacity as a pool of potential members...other organisations with whom the organisation competes, cooperates, or enters into various exchange relationships...the public-in-contact, with whom or on whom the organisation's members work, and the public served'.¹⁹⁵ Consideration of these diverse publics is particularly important where sustainable development policies are concerned and participation is actively sought. Moreover, the diverse publics represent the 'community' in the Community Forest programme, a prefix which symbolises both the type of good provided (primarily a public good of benefit to the community as a whole¹⁹⁶) and the agency chosen for its achievement (the wider community as integral to the development and implementation process). In this sense, the CFs are unusual in that the diverse publics, or community, are both beneficiary and an integral part of the process of development.

It is for this reason that consideration of the formal organisation associated with the GNF alone would provide only a partial picture of the Project's implementation. Importantly, there are many groups and

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ GNF, Forest Advisory Forum Report, (26/7/94), para.18.

¹⁹⁵ Blau & Scott, Formal Organisations, (1964), p.59.

¹⁹⁶ Blau & Scott describe organisations providing these goods as commonweal organisations, whose 'distinctive characteristic...is that the public-at-large is their prime beneficiary'. Ibid., p.74.

organisations which lie outside the formal organisation but which are, nonetheless, significant because of the role that they play, or will play, in the administrative process. This can be called the wider organisation and constitutes 'the working partnerships needed to carry the initiative to fruition over its long timescale'.¹⁹⁷ Some of these partnerships were briefly discussed both in the previous chapter and above, with reference to the formal organisation. However, because of the importance of these groups and organisations it is worth providing a fuller catalogue of them and their anticipated roles.

THE PARTNERSHIP IN OVERVIEW

The National Partners

The national partners to the GNF are the Forestry and Countryside Commissions and their key role is:

To establish an effective national framework to promote and support the implementation of the objectives and proposals of the Great North Forest Plan towards the creation of a new, well-wooded, multipurpose countryside in south Tyne and Wear and north-east Durham.¹⁹⁸

The CFs are a joint initiative developed between CC and FC, and they are actively involved in directing and advising the Project members. In addition, they provide financial support for the GNF Project Team by directly supporting the running of the office and by employing Project Team members, and they are responsible for various grants that support the Forest development. The CC, for example, administers grant aid to the Project through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, the Hedgerow Initiative, the Parish Paths Partnership and the Rural Action Initiative. It also promotes the GNF with central government and seeks continued government endorsement.¹⁹⁹ The FC administers the Woodland Grant Scheme and the Community Woodland Supplement, it can acquire appropriate land for development, and similarly seeks continued government endorsement of the Project.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.16.23, p.93.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p.93.

¹⁹⁹ GNF, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', para.7.3, p.7.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., para.7.4, p.7.

Local Government

The five local authorities participating in the GNF are major partners and the key role assigned to them is:

To provide an effective and supportive local policy and programme framework to promote the implementation of the Forest Plan and the delivery of its social, economic and environmental benefits to their own community.²⁰¹

As with the national partners, the local authorities are actively involved in directing and advising the Project Team, and, again, they help fund the running of the office and employ some of the staff. They also have more general responsibilities for financing the development and, in particular, they undertake the establishment of woodland on land that they own.

The local authorities are expected to 'give high priority to the creation of the Great North Forest'; to take account of the Great North Forest Plan in Structural Plans, Unitary Development Plans, District-wide Local plans, etc.; to assist with public relations work; and incorporate the Community Forest objectives into future developments.²⁰² It should also be noted that parish councils have a role in representing the views of their constituents.²⁰³

Central Government Departments

The key role of central government departments is to 'help create an effective policy, advice and incentive framework to promote a major growth in woodland creation, public access and recreation provision within the countryside of the Great North Forest'.²⁰⁴

The Forest Plan cites the DoE (now DETR) as a major spending department dispensing countryside grants, and it is the sponsoring department for the CC and responsible for English Nature. Also cited is the MAFF, a major provider of farming grants and an adviser to farmers through ADAS²⁰⁵, an executive agency since 1992 which 'provides a

²⁰¹ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), p.95.

²⁰² GNF, 'Memorandum of Agreement 1993-96', para.7.5, p.7.

²⁰³ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.16.34, p.95.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p.94.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., para.16.29, p.94.

comprehensive range of consultancy services to the land-based industries'.²⁰⁶ The FC also reports directly to Forestry Ministers in the MAFF, amongst others. The Department of Employment (now part of the DfEE), although not specifically cited as a partner, is involved through secondment of a Business Liaison Officer to the Project Team, and the DNH is indirectly involved through The Sports Council and English Heritage.²⁰⁷

National Agencies

National agencies have a key role through 'their advisory powers, specialist knowledge and professional resources to offer appropriate policy resources and technical advice, administrative and financial support to promote the realisation of the Great North Forest as a sound and sustainable project'.²⁰⁸ The agencies cited are English Nature, the Sports Council and English Heritage.

English Nature is the executive type NDPB sponsored by the DETR. Its role in the Forest is primarily to advise on nature conservation, although it is intended to provide some assistance with conservation fieldwork and technical and financial support for conservation projects.²⁰⁹ The Sports Council is the executive type NDPB sponsored by the DNH and its role is 'advising landowners about recreational facilities on their land, possibly providing assistance through grants and national lottery funds, and encouraging Forest use by local people'.²¹⁰ English Heritage is the executive type NDPB also sponsored by the DNH; its role is 'to support the establishment of...information on the historical and archaeological potential of the area in advance of major woodland planting', to secure the exploration, conservation and interpretation of the area's cultural heritage and possibly to provide

²⁰⁶ Cabinet Office, The Civil Service Year Book 1996, (1995), col.60.

²⁰⁷ Written enquiries have also been answered by the Government Office for the North East, itself responsible to the Employment Department (now part of the Department for Education and Employment), the Department of Trade and Industry, and the DoE and Department of Transport (now merged to form the DETR).

²⁰⁸ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), p.95.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., para.16.30, p.98.

²¹⁰ Ibid., para.16.31, p.98.

financial assistance to landowners to meet these ends.²¹¹

Farmers and Landowners

This group's key role is to 'develop a multipurpose approach to land management towards the economic provision of a wide range of community benefits within the context of a well-managed, wooded countryside'.²¹² This is to be achieved directly through partnerships with individual farmers and landowners to encourage diversification of their activities as a response to wider agricultural changes.²¹³ However, it also involves partnerships with their representatives, principally the CLA and NFU.

The CLA is an association of owners of agricultural and other rural land, promoting their interests through political representation, advising members and publicising information of concern to its members. The NFU represents farmers; it is not a trade union as is often thought, but represents farmers' interests and plays a part in scrutinizing relevant legislation, particularly on parliamentary committees.²¹⁴ The role of the CLA and NFU in the Forest's development lies in 'articulating their members interests and concerns about the future management of the countryside', promoting the GNF as a 'positive vehicle for countryside change within the wider agricultural environment', and advising their members on incentives and diversification opportunities.²¹⁵

The Business Community

The Forest Plan includes forestry and timber companies, business groupings and agencies, and local businesses under this heading. Their key role is to 'give practical and financial support to the Great North Forest as a key project in the evolution of a high quality, productive environment for their employees and customers and for the attraction of

²¹¹ Ibid., para.16.32, p.98.

²¹² Ibid., p.95.

²¹³ Ibid., para.16.36, p.96.

²¹⁴ Barney Holbeche, 'Policy and Influence: MAFF and the NFU', in Grant Jordan (Ed), The Commercial Lobbyists, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1991), pp.136-7.

²¹⁵ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.16.35, p.96.

new investment to the north-east'.²¹⁶

Clearly, forestry and timber companies are important for the Forest's development; 'offering advice and identifying opportunities...for commercial woodland establishment, timber production and use, both for existing owners and for financial investors'. Moreover, they have an important part to play in developing new market outlets for products from the Forest.²¹⁷

Business groupings and agencies are expected to act as a link for the transfer of advice, training and financial support from the private sector to other groups involved with the Forest. Less obviously they are to 'recognise the potential contribution...of the Great North Forest...to the internal well-being and external image of the region in terms of economic regeneration'.²¹⁸ The Northern Development Company and The Wearside Opportunity, both private companies supporting local businesses (previously involved via the Officer Technical Group until its demise), and Business in the Community, a registered charity sponsored by business, have a part to play in coordinating the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Other non-profit making companies supporting business like TECs have a role, as do more traditional organisations like local Chambers of Commerce, the voluntary organisations that represent the interests of commercial, industrial, and trading business people. Finally, there are local businesses themselves, which are expected to sponsor land acquisition and woodland creation, and to provide support 'through the donation of money and materials to activities, events and practical projects', in exchange for the benefits provided for public relations and from an improved local environment.²¹⁹

The Voluntary Sector

The final partnership in the GNF is with the voluntary sector, a collection of environmental and other interest groups, schools and

²¹⁶ Ibid., p.96.

²¹⁷ Ibid., para.16.37, p.96.

²¹⁸ Ibid., para.16.38, p.96.

²¹⁹ Ibid., para.16.39, p.96.

educational institutions, community groups and local people. The role given to this group is to 'use their organisational skills and financial resources to engage local communities with the planning, practical management and use of their countryside'.²²⁰

The environmental groups identified are the Woodland Trust, the National Trust (NT) and the BTCV. These are registered charities which either acquire and preserve woodland and other places of natural beauty or, as in the case of the BTCV, simply work to protect and improve the environment through practical activities. Also noted in the Forest Plan is The Groundwork Trust which supports community development through education, the arts and practical activities, particularly the improvement of derelict land. The Groundwork Trust was established in 1981 to improve the environmental and economic prospects of local areas. It consists of a network of not-for-profit companies managed and funded by the public, private and voluntary sectors.²²¹ These environmental organisations, according to the Forest Plan, will 'play an important part in the creation of the fabric of the...Forest' and underpin local involvement.²²²

The Project also involves interest groups 'with concerns about particular aspects of the rural environment'.²²³ Examples mentioned elsewhere in the Forest Plan are The Tidy Britain Group, a charity supported by the government; the CPRE, a conservation charity; and the Ramblers Association, a charity furthering the interests of walkers.

Schools and educational institutions are mentioned under the heading of voluntary groups (although it is difficult to see how they can be properly described as such), and are given some importance as 'future custodians and users of the countryside'.²²⁴ Undoubtedly the Forest also has significant importance in offering educational opportunities for children and young people. Finally, the Forest Plan notes that:

²²⁰ Ibid., p.96.

²²¹ The Ground Work Trust is overseen by a board of management drawn from the community, local authorities and local businesses. Stoker, The Politics of Local Government, (1991), p.73 & Groundwork leaflet 'Introducing Groundwork: people in action for the environment', (1999).

²²² GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.16.40, p.96.

²²³ Ibid., para.16.41, p.96.

²²⁴ Ibid., para.16.42, p.96.

'Community groups will be key focal points for local people to develop their individual associations with the Forest'; local people themselves being 'central to the long-term strength and security of the...Forest'.²²⁵

FINANCING THE FOREST

Although appealing to citizen participation, sustainable development is to be achieved primarily through the use of market forces and the GNF is no exception. Many of the partners are linked to the Project principally through the financial support they can either gain from involvement in the Forest development or offer to it. Financing the development of the Forest is a complex affair and will come from a variety of public and private sources and the Forest Plan states that:

Grants from Countryside and Forestry Commissions, Ministry of Agriculture and Department of the Environment will help with planting, land management, land restoration and recreation provision. Further money will come from local government and industry and private investment will be attracted from companies which recognise future recreation potential. Sound business partnerships will be a key concern for those responsible for planning, establishing and managing Community Forests.²²⁶

Grants from the public sector are, therefore, vital to the success of the Project and, although some aspects of the grant system have already been discussed, by way of summary they are as follows.

Grants and Incentives for Farmers and Landowners

To a large extent, the implementation of the CF programme is driven by financial inducements mainly provided by the CC, the FC and the MAFF, to farmers and landowners in the area. Farmers, for example, can apply for grants from the Set-Aside Scheme and the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme, both administered by the MAFF to encourage the removal of agricultural land from production.²²⁷ MAFF are also responsible for other grants for farmers like the Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme which 'helps... with the capital costs of maintaining efficient farming systems, in meeting the cost of pollution control and in conserving the

²²⁵ Ibid., paras.16.43-16.44, p.97.

²²⁶ Ibid., para.1.10, p.4.

²²⁷ GNF, Forest Advisory Forum Report, (26/7/94), para.15.

countryside'.²²⁸

Other landowners have recourse to the FC's Woodland Grant Scheme, administered through the Forestry Authority, aimed at increasing tree cover; and the Community Woodland Supplement, aimed at creating new woodland with public access close to urban areas.²²⁹ The CC also administers grants in the form of the Countryside Stewardship and Hedgerow Incentive Schemes to encourage farmers and other landowners to retain and enhance the attractive features of their holdings.²³⁰ Moreover, there are many other schemes that have been established and are administered by public or publicly sponsored bodies to assist farmers in activities less obviously related to forestry. For example, the CC's Landscape Conservation Scheme and Recreation Grants; the RDC's Redundant Building Grants; Training and New Enterprise Grants provided by TECs; English Heritage's Historic Building and Ancient Monument Grants; and Project Grants from English Nature.²³¹

Financial Support for Voluntary Groups

Voluntary groups are intended to play a significant part in the development of the GNF and a proliferation of grants and incentives are also available to them. They have access to various grants from central government agencies, like those available from the CC for the purchase of existing woodland for management, or for buying new land for forestry development.²³² The Project Team can provide grant aid for community led environmental projects implemented by groups like the BTCV and the Groundwork Trust.²³³ Arts and culture projects can be supported through charitable trusts like Northern Arts which runs the Artists in Residence Project jointly with Local Arts Development Agencies.²³⁴ Environmental

²²⁸ CC, Farming in Community Forests, (1993), p.10.

²²⁹ GNF, Forest Advisory Forum Report, (26/7/94), paras.17 & 25.

²³⁰ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.6.8, p.22.

²³¹ CC, Farming in Community Forests, (1993), p.11.

²³² GNF, Forest Advisory Forum Report, (26/7/94), para.56.

²³³ Ibid., para.56.

²³⁴ Ibid., paras.58 & 60.

education projects may be funded by local authorities, the Woodland Trust and the National Trust,²³⁵ and, since 1996, environmental groups have been able to obtain financial support from local landfill operators through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme.²³⁶

European Funding

As with many other areas of local government, funding from the EU is becoming more significant. This is particularly true in areas like the north-east of England which is in the throes of restructuring following the decline of heavy industries such as coal mining, shipbuilding and steel production. The GNF, it is claimed, will attract European funds by providing an 'anchor for substantial grant applications for capital programmes' from the EU's Single Regional Programme.²³⁷

Other Capital Project Funding

In addition to funds from the EU, capital projects can also be financed through the Government's Single Regeneration Budget, the derelict land programme administered by English Partnerships (a NDPB sponsored by the DETR which raises money from the public and private sectors to support regeneration and inward investment)²³⁸ and from the CC and FC.²³⁹ Interested parties can also bid for capital funding Lottery and Millennium Funds, administered by the Office of the National Lottery at the DNH, which are used to finance an ever wider range of projects.

Business Funding

Business funding is expected not only to come from forestry and timber companies, but also from local businesses and the relevant business groupings and agencies. Such financial support is expected to arise from commercial timber production potential, the public relations

²³⁵ Ibid., para.64.

²³⁶ ENTRUST, 'Interpretations & Precedents of the Landfill Tax Regulations', [B/11/98], (1998).

²³⁷ GNF, Forest Advisory Forum Report, (26/7/94), para.22.

²³⁸ Leaflet, 'English Partnerships: An Introduction', (1998).

²³⁹ GNF, Forest Advisory Forum Report, (26/7/94), para.22.

benefits derived from sponsorship and from the aesthetic improvements which will result from development of the Forest.²⁴⁰

3.4. TRADITIONAL METHODS OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE ORGANISATION

The most important point about the administrative arrangements for developing the GNF is its complexity, combining elements of the public, private and voluntary sectors at local and national levels. It is clear that this structure does not lend itself to traditional notions of accountability where responsibilities can be clearly identified and traced up through the organisation to accountable ministers or councillors. There are three specific features of the GNF which are worth discussing because of the difficulties they present for accountability. First, the blurring of the boundaries between sectors and between participating groups, arising from mixed membership of the formal and wider organisations. Secondly, the diverse and multiple accountabilities which appear to exist, specifically with some members of the formal organisation. Finally, the complex system of funding the Forest's development which divides responsibility between many of the participating groups and, in particular, public bodies.

MIXED MEMBERSHIP

The administration of this example of sustainable development is inclusive and is characterised by the concepts of community and partnership. The result is participation by a wide variety of public, private and voluntary bodies, reflected in the membership of both the formal and wider organisation.

First, the formal organisation is advised and steered by groups (more properly committees) served by representatives of the many bodies with an interest in the development of the Forest. This is not so unusual as the Forest spans five local authority areas and, as noted in Chapter 2, joint arrangements are often employed in similar administrative activities. Secondly, and less usual, is the mixed membership of the Project Team which has a staff appointed from a mixture of public and voluntary bodies of the wider partnership. These are mainly the

²⁴⁰ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.16.37-16.39, p.96.

participating local authorities, but also include two government departments, a NDPB and two charities.

Mixed membership arrangements are not new and, for example, can be traced back to at least the 1960s and the National Economic Development Council. 'Neddy', as it came to be known, was established in 1962 for indicative economic planning, and brought together ministers, employers and trades unionists in an organisation staffed from the private sector.²⁴¹ Neddy reflected the corporatist beliefs popular at the time and was not so dissimilar to the current public/private partnership idea. Public/private partnerships for implementing policy have become common in the local government arena where the likes of local enterprise agencies have been established to support the development of small businesses. Here, both the public and private sectors have responsibility for providing resources and are represented on the management committees.²⁴²

A third aspect of mixed membership is to be found in the make up of the wider organisation which is comprised of the many public, private and voluntary sector partners fundamental to the success of the Project. The GNF illustrates the changing nature of local governance where the emphasis is placed upon local authorities working in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors. It also illustrates the proliferation of quasi-governmental organizations in recent decades, multiplying the number of bodies with which local authorities have to interact, and the increasing role that these bodies have in the field of local governance.

The partnership arrangement found in this Project is clearly not simply external, resulting from cooperation between different sectors of the economy or between different organisations. It also characterises the internal workings of such participating bodies as TECs, Tidy Britain and Groundwork; and, importantly, the workings of the formal organisations where, for example, the staff of the Project Team are appointed and paid by their sponsoring bodies. The overall result is a noticeable loss of clarity and a blurring of the boundaries between organisations and between sectors which serves to obscure the identity of those who are

²⁴¹ See R.J.S.Baker, Administrative Theory and Public Administration, (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1972), pp.165-6; and Peter Hennessy, Whitehall, (London: Fontana, 1990), p.180.

²⁴² Stoker, The Politics of Local Government, (1991), pp.71-72.

responsible for the implementation of the Project.

MULTIPLE ACCOUNTABILITIES

Accountability in bureaucracies has traditionally been based on hierarchical control, and the most rational form of bureaucracy is defined by offices having clearly specified functions and a clear hierarchy of offices.²⁴³ Accountability here, as Elcock explains, is upwards, 'through the bureaucratic chain of command and ultimately to elected representatives' who may be ministers or elected local councillors.²⁴⁴ However, the field of public administration is known for its complexity and it is common to find mixed accountabilities. Indeed Elcock points out that officials can be simultaneously accountable in several directions - upwards, downwards to the public, and outwards to their colleagues. Nevertheless, it is unusual to find individual officials accountable upwards to several different public bodies as appears in this case study.

Accountability upwards remains the mainstay of the administrative arrangements in the public sector in the UK and this is also the case in the GNF. The CC's representative on the Members Steering Group, for example, remains accountable through the CC to the DETR and its Minister in Parliament in a, more or less, conventional way. However, the lines of accountability are undoubtedly confused by the diverse membership of the Project's organisation, and by the number of participating public sector bodies. This is a particular concern for the formal organisation and perhaps most acute in the Project Team where the Project Director provides the clearest example. He must remain responsible to Gateshead MBC and its councillors as both his employer and as financial controller of the Project. He is responsible to the MSG which is accountable for the actions of the Project Team and has a duty to review the progress made in developing the Forest. Yet he is also responsible to the DETR and MAFF which monitor the progress of all twelve CFs through Annual Monitoring Reports to which the Project Directors contribute. Moreover, an element of responsibility must also exist towards the FC and CC, as lead organisations for the Project, and towards the many other grant awarding

²⁴³ Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, (1921), quoted in Albrow, *Bureaucracy*, (1970), p.44.

²⁴⁴ Elcock, *Change and Decay?*, (1991), p.16.

public bodies which support the Project.

There is little precedent elsewhere in the public sector for such a complex arrangement as found in this case study. Mixed membership was a feature of bodies like Neddy, and still is for bodies like the local enterprise agencies, TECs, the Groundwork Trust and joint bodies and committees. However, the GNF differs in the sheer number and variety of participating public bodies. The result is that responsibility is stretched in many directions and this presents real difficulties for identifying to whom individuals are accountable.

DIVIDED RESPONSIBILITIES

The third point to be made about accountability in this case study is the curious way in which the development of the Forest is financed. Although private sector funding for the Forest should not be ignored, the bulk of financial support inevitably comes from the many public bodies which make up the formal and wider organisation. So, whilst the Project Team has a clear role in establishing the GNF, it is not primarily a spending body and, consequently, responsibility for the successful implementation of the Project is separated from its funding. The Project Team has, for example, a responsibility 'to secure adequate resources for the Great North Forest, including private sector funding and targeted grant aid',²⁴⁵ but since those funds come from other bodies, it is not properly an executive body. Rather, its role is as an advisor to those interested in participating in the Project, and as a coordinator, bringing interested parties together with the appropriate grant awarding bodies.

This financial arrangement highlights the increasing role given to central government departments and quasi-governmental bodies in the execution of local projects. There is no practical reason why the Project could not be financed by central government grant via the relevant local authorities, rather than funding it through a series of departments and other agencies. The Project Director claims that the structure of the GNF Project is seen to offer a more direct link between the 'grass roots' and the major decision makers in government.²⁴⁶ However, the chosen

²⁴⁵ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.3.4, pp.11-12.

²⁴⁶ Interview with Vaughan, July 1995.

arrangement is less democratic and may be less responsive than direct funding, and tends to further emasculate an already weakened local government. Moreover, these financial arrangements represent a further diminution in the clarity of accountability for local government expenditure criticised, for example, in the 1965 Layfield Report.²⁴⁷ Overall, the Project suffers from no single agency having overall control,²⁴⁸ and there is undoubted confusion between responsibilities for the provision of resources and for the success of the Project. As a demonstration of this, it is worth quoting at some length the DETR's response to questions raised about the administration of the GNF which begs the question of where responsibility finally lies:

The whole rationale of the Community Forest idea was...that it would try to draw in funding and support from a whole range of public and private partners, without itself requiring funds other than to cover the administrative costs of the Teams. If at the end of the day targets for afforestation etc are not met it would mainly be for the Countryside Commission, as sponsor of the initiative, to answer any criticisms about the forest teams' effectiveness. The Commission itself answers, in turn, to the Secretary of State for the Environment.²⁴⁹

ELUSIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

This chapter has illustrated the complex arrangements which have been developed for administering the GNF. It is argued that such arrangements offend against the traditional principles of accountability expounded more than a century ago by John Stuart Mill. In his oft quoted comment, Mill contended that:

As a general rule, any executive function, whether superior or subordinate, should be the appointed duty of some individual. It should be apparent to all the world who did everything, and through whose default anything was left undone. Responsibility is null when nobody knows who is responsible...To maintain it at its highest there must be one person who receives the whole praise of what is well done, the whole blame of what is ill. Nor, even when real, can it

²⁴⁷ Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Local Government Finance, The Layfield Report, [Cmd.6453], (London: HMSO, 1976).

²⁴⁸ Similar observations have been made by Allan Bruce & Allan McConnell, 'Accountability in Local Government and the NHS', in Robert Pyper (Ed), Aspects of Accountability in the British System of Government, (Eastham, Merseyside: Tudor, 1996), p.146.

²⁴⁹ Letter from Jim Bowman, Forestry Policy Branch, DETR, 1/12/98.

be divided without being weakened.²⁵⁰

Society has changed considerably since Mill's time, and the provision of public services expanded so much in breadth and complexity that traditional concepts of accountability are no longer workable. The proliferation of government agencies presents particular difficulties for the administration of the GNF and may have serious implications for coordination and control.

Accountability based on hierarchical control is unlikely to function adequately in the peculiarly complex administrative arrangements found in this case study. However, the GNF remains primarily a public project funded mainly by public money and it is vital that accountability be clear. This is particularly so where the public sector operates in such close proximity to the private and voluntary sectors that may have different motives. Yet it is difficult, even after detailed examination, to identify just who is accountable and to whom they are accountable in this Project. Noting what Dennis Thompson has called 'the problem of many hands', Bovens has recently made this point, saying that

in complex organisations many different functionaries, at various levels and in various measure, often contribute to the policy and decisions of the organisation, it is often extraordinarily difficult to determine who is responsible for the organisation's conduct in the last instance.²⁵¹

However, accountability remains a critical difficulty for complex organisations like that for the administration of the GNF.

In conclusion, the difficulties of accountability in the GNF can be compared to those prevalent in the later half of the 19th Century when the scale and complexity of the emerging welfare state created new links of accountability in the hierarchy between local and central government, and a new body of professional administrators to replace those operating at a purely local level. According to Patricia Day and Rudolf Klein, Edwin Chadwick's vision of administrative rationality embodied in the 1834 Poor Law, attempted to 'assimilate accountability in service

²⁵⁰ J.S.Mill, Considerations on Representative Government, [1861], R.B.McCallum (Ed), (Oxford, 1946), p.264.

²⁵¹ Bovens, The Quest for Responsibility, (1998), p.4.

delivery to the bureaucratic model'.²⁵² They assert that there are two features of the Chadwickian system that continue to have relevance to the discussion of accountability. First, that the New Poor Law 'provoked debate about the location of accountability' and 'raised questions about possible conflicts between different lines of accountability'.²⁵³ This is particularly relevant to this study which has, so far, highlighted the complexity of the administration of the GNF arising from the inclusion of many participants.

Secondly, Day and Klein say that Chadwick's 'faith in controlling services through defining their aims was betrayed by the ability of those actually running the Poor Law system at the local level to substitute their own objectives and rules'.²⁵⁴ Little need be said about this here, apart from the fact that it represents some of the difficulties to be found with the move from thinking about accountability as control through rigid bureaucratic arrangements to that of good estate management or managerial accountability. Managerial accountability and the process of 'making those with delegated authority answerable for carrying out agreed tasks according to agreed criteria of performance',²⁵⁵ dominates in the administration of the GNF and provides the subject of the following chapter.

²⁵² Patricia Day & Rudolf Klein, Accountabilities: Five Public Services, (London: Tavistock, 1987), pp.16-17.

²⁵³ Ibid., p.18.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p.18. Also see 'The Many Headed Tribunal', The Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission of 1909, Reprinted in Richard A.Chapman & A.Dunsire, Style in Administration: Readings in Public Administration, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), pp.91-97.

²⁵⁵ Day & Klein, Accountabilities, (1987), pp.7 & 27.

CHAPTER 4

THE GREAT NORTH FOREST: IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGERIAL METHODS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

It is claimed that the CF programme is 'pioneering a new approach to integrated environmental planning and management' based on forging new partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors.²⁵⁶ This is a new method of implementing public policy and provides a good example of how sustainable development is being undertaken. The programme is, therefore, of interest because it may provide a model for the implementation of future sustainable development policies. It is also of broader interest because of the new relationships which have been developed between public sector bodies, and because of the unusually close relationships which exist between the public, private and voluntary sectors. This chapter assesses the success of the CF programme by considering the progress that has been made in establishing the GNF. In addition, the system of accountability prevalent in this peculiarly complex partnership arrangement, primarily managerial accountability, is explored. First, the principles of managerial accountability are discussed with particular reference to the need for clear assignment of responsibility, the use of explicit standards and measures of performance, and the concept of value for money. Secondly, the progress that has been made in implementing the GNF Project, its cost and some of the difficulties encountered, are considered through analysis of interview material and available quantitative data. Finally, the practical difficulties of applying managerial methods of accountability to this Project are examined and the adequacy of these methods considered.

4.2. MANAGERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE COMMUNITY FOREST PROGRAMME

PRINCIPLES

Managerial accountability has progressively replaced systems based on hierarchy in the public sector over the last twenty years or so. It emerged from what Christopher Hood has called 'new public management' (NPM), a convenient shorthand 'for the set of broadly similar administrative doctrines which dominated the bureaucratic reform agenda

²⁵⁶ CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), Appendix B, paras.1.5 & 1.6, pp.1-2.

in many of the OECD group of countries from the late 1970s'.²⁵⁷ Managerial accountability is the result of attempts to move the public sector away from the hierarchical bureaucratic structures with which it has traditionally been associated, and to incorporate business methods. According to the Head of the Civil Service, Robin Butler, this 'management revolution' reflects a need to deal with the 'myth of omnipotent personal responsibility' of ministers by delegating responsibility for administration to the lowest appropriate levels of the civil service, whilst retaining accountability at ministerial level.²⁵⁸ These new arrangements depend upon providing ministers with the necessary information to better oversee the work of their departments and enable them to act as chief executives, as well as perform their more traditional role of chief policy makers.²⁵⁹

Hood has summarised seven doctrinal components of NPM (see Appendix 4) and most of them can be identified in the workings of various parts of the CF programme. However, there are two broad aspects of managerial accountability, combining one or more NPM features, which need to be considered here. The first is the clear assignment of responsibility for action to manageable units within the public sector (government departments, NDPBs, Agencies, local authorities, and so on) reducing the need for ministers to involve themselves in the day-to-day running of their departments. In this way, ministers would more easily be able to balance their role of departmental management with their political responsibilities, including policy direction. As an example of NPM, the FMI offered the following benefits:

By delegating responsibility, by emancipating themselves from responsibility for individual actions by their nominal subordinates, ministers and parliament would be able to strengthen their effective control.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ OECD is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Hood, 'A Public Management for All Seasons?', (1991), pp.3-4.

²⁵⁸ Robin Butler, 'The Evolution of the Civil Service - A progress Report', Public Administration, (1993), Vol.71, p.398, and his 1992 Frank Stacey Memorial Lecture, 'The New Public Management: The Contribution of Whitehall and Academia', reprinted in Public Policy and Administration, (1992), Vol.7, p.6.

²⁵⁹ This, for example, was the reason behind the introduction of the MINIS and FMI systems by Mrs. Thatcher's Efficiency Advisor Derek Rayner in the early 1980s. Hennessy, Whitehall, (1990), p.608.

²⁶⁰ Day & Klein, Accountabilities, (1987), p.44.

Secondly, goals, objectives and targets must be specified and performance against these criteria must be measured. The information concerning achievement and relevant costs can then be fed back to ministers for them to assess the performance of the manageable units for which they are responsible. Ministers, it is argued, are thus better able to hold those units responsible for their actions and are, in themselves, more accountable to Parliament: effective political accountability, to paraphrase Day and Klein, is seen to be dependent on effective managerial accountability.²⁶¹

ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

Locating responsibility in the administration of the GNF is difficult because many public bodies (as well as private and voluntary sector groups) have been given a role in the development of the Forest and responsibility is divided amongst them in a complex way. Some public bodies have specific responsibilities for the progress of the Project and the establishment of the Forest. The Project Team, for example, was responsible for the preparation of the Forest Plan, it must prepare business plans and annual reports and, particularly, it must compete to attract funding for the Project from a variety of sources. However, responsibility for funding the Project lies with other public bodies, like the CC, FC and MAFF which administer the grants necessary to develop the Forest. This separation of responsibility for funding from responsibility for the Forest's physical establishment is a result of the partnership approach adopted for the CF programme. The DETR claims that 'a considerable degree of accountability for public money' is built into the system because each participating public body is responsible for the funding that it provides to the programme.²⁶² The CC, for example, is responsible to the DETR for the £3,959,000 it spent on CFs in 1997/98.²⁶³

Although in the complex arrangements developed for administering the GNF responsibility is devolved and divided, there is continued reliance on hierarchical links between individual public sector bodies

²⁶¹ Ibid., p.44.

²⁶² Jim Bowman, DETR, letter of 1/12/98.

²⁶³ CC, Annual Report 1997/98, 31st Report, [CCP 533], (Cheltenham: CC, 1998), p.15.

and accountable ministers or local authorities. However, the emphasis given to breaking up monolithic structures of government and creating manageable administrative units more distant from accountable ministers in NPM, requires those manageable units to have a much clearer understanding of what is expected of them. This is achieved through a further characteristic of NPM, that of explicit statements of goals, objectives and targets so that progress can be easily measured and the performance of manageable units assessed. However, the responsibilities of these different bodies are not always clearly defined. So, for example, if targets for afforestation are not met, it would be the CC, as sponsor of the initiative, which has to answer to the Secretary of State for the Environment for any criticisms about the effectiveness of the forest teams, rather than the Project Teams themselves.²⁶⁴

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The clear statement of goals and objectives for the public sector bodies responsible for implementing any government policy serves two purposes. First, goals and objectives provide direction and a sense of purpose for the participating organisations. Secondly, progress made towards goals and objectives provides the relevant information for accountable ministers to oversee and assess the performance of the accountable units for which they are responsible. Thus the minister acts as chief executive, directing and controlling those units, and can be legitimately held to account for their actions. The accurate measurement of performance is, therefore, crucial for the effective functioning of managerial accountability.

Ministers must have adequate information about both the inputs and outputs to manage and control their departments and ensure that value for money is obtained. This is because value for money includes economy - the comparison of actual and planned inputs to ensure as few resources as possible are used - effectiveness - the comparison of actual and planned outputs to measure the extent to which objectives are achieved, and efficiency - the comparison of actual inputs and outputs to ensure that

²⁶⁴ Letter from Jim Bowman, DETR, 1/12/98.

resources are used in the best possible way.²⁶⁵ Nevertheless, managerial accountability may not be easy to apply to the important area of programmes and projects where, as Leslie Chapman once commented, 'government spending...though well intentioned, seems so often to end in disaster'.²⁶⁶ This is particularly so where inputs may originate from a number of units of different departments and agencies, where outputs are numerous and diverse, and where the public sector operates in close partnership with the private and voluntary sectors.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING IN THE GNF

There are a number of sources of information that can be used to assess the performance of the GNF Project. First, annual business plans are prepared by each participating public body setting out proposed activities and their costs for the forthcoming year. So, for example, the GNF Project Team prepares business plans that are agreed with the Members Steering Group; the CC prepares business plans for the DETR, and so on. Secondly, targets can be developed for activities which contribute to the objectives of the Project, like the area of land to be planted or the distance of hedgerow to be established over a given period. Thirdly, annual reports may be published by participating public bodies, outlining achievements and costs over the year. Finally, numerous data are collected by the CC and presented in annual monitoring reports to the departments accountable for the CF programme, principally the DETR and MAFF. Monitoring reports are of vital importance for evaluating efficiency, effectiveness and economy since they bring together information about targets, progress made and the costs incurred.

The CC's annual monitoring reports represent a summary of the annual outputs, and many inputs, of all twelve CF projects, enabling ministers to judge the overall progress of the programme and the value for money that has been achieved. They are, therefore, central to this study and include quantitative data for the following seven indicators

²⁶⁵ See, for example, Greenwood & Wilson, Public Administration in Britain Today, (1989), p.12, & John Glynn, Andrew Gray & Bill Jenkins, 'Auditing the Three Es: The Challenge of Effectiveness', Public Policy and Administration, Vol.7, No.3, (1992), pp.58-59.

²⁶⁶ Leslie Chapman, Your Disobedient Servant: The Continuing Story of Whitehall's Overspending, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p.13. Hennessy also notes the large proportion of expenditure absorbed by programmes and the difficulties of controlling this expenditure in the late 1980s. Whitehall, (1990), pp.616-617.

identified by the DETR and MAFF for monitoring purposes:

- i. area of new planting;
- ii. area of existing woodland brought into management;
- iii. area of land and/or length of routes newly opened for recreation/access;
- iv. area of non-woodland habitat created and/or managed;
- v. length of hedgerows created and/or managed;
- vi. area of derelict land reclaimed for forest related uses; and
- vii. amount of private and voluntary sector support.

In addition, information is requested on:

- non-forestry funding of the forest;
- community involvement; and
- costs of the core forest teams.²⁶⁷

However, the monitoring reports also include details of many other activities undertaken for the CFs, and of particular interest are the levels of grant and other funding attracted to the programme, and specific initiatives that have been started or are in progress.

4.3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GREAT NORTH FOREST

Significant progress has been made in implementing the GNF since it was formally created in 1990. A Project Team has been established and agreements between principal partners confirmed. A Forest Plan was developed, agreed and published by January 1994, and thence incorporated into the statutory development plans of the relevant local authorities. By 1998 the Project was fully five years into its implementation phase²⁶⁸, providing a sufficiently long period for its progress to be sensibly assessed. The assessment of the GNF which follows will consider both the inputs and outputs of the Project as far as they can be established. First, the progress that has been made in implementing the GNF since its establishment will be considered through presentation of some of the forestry and non-forestry activities undertaken, and discussion of the quantitative data that is available. Secondly, some of the costs of implementation will be considered, together with an examination of the principle difficulties encountered in implementing the

²⁶⁷ CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), Appendix B, paras.1.7 & 1.9, p.2.

²⁶⁸ Implementation formally began sometime in 1993. The GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), p.101, gives a start date of March 1993; and the CC, Community Forest Briefing Document, (1995), p.13, gives this as 10th August 1993.

Project.

PROGRESS

Forestry and Non-Forestry Activities

The GNF is not intended to be a continuous tract of trees but woodland interspersed with heath, wetland, ponds and streams. Moreover, it incorporates leisure, sports, arts, archaeological and educational facilities to make this a multipurpose development.²⁶⁹ So it is worth considering some of the individual developments highlighted by the participants, to illustrate something of the breadth of the Project. These developments are divided into forestry activities, like the purchase of woodland, which are directly related to the aims of the Project; and non-forestry activities, like the development of sports and recreation facilities, which help illustrate how specific developments have been tailored to conform to the aims and objectives of the Project.

A number of existing woods have been acquired for management in the GNF area. Durham County Council has itself purchased woodland at Craghead near Stanley, at Cong Burn near Chester-le-Street and, in cooperation with the Woodland Trust, some smaller woods in the area like Hellhole Woods. Considerable work has also gone into developing and improving the woodland surrounding the Beamish North of England Open Air Museum, west of Chester-le-Street. The museum is a re-creation of life in the region around the turn of the Century, set in an historic wooded estate at the head of the River Team. In the South Tyneside area, the Metropolitan Borough Council and the Woodland Trust have purchased Monkton Fell, a small but important piece of woodland beside the Sunderland to Newcastle railway line.

A number of trails and walks have been established around the area, often enhanced by sculptures which can be seen along the woodland footpaths around Beamish, for example. In the City of Sunderland Council area the Coalfield Way takes the walker around some of the reclaimed industrial sites of Hetton, and the Stephenson Trail follows the old rail line from Hetton to the sea. Reclamation has also been undertaken at South Pelaw in the Durham County Council Area, considerable tree planting has been carried out at Newbottle Village near Sunderland by a local

²⁶⁹ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), p.3 and pp.20-48.

landowner after planning permission for housing was rejected, and the private Lambton Estate, near Chester-le-Street, has continued to plant trees.

Several sports facilities have been developed with the Forest in mind. The Community North Sports Complex, near Sunderland, for example, includes a hedged perimeter, woodland planting and a link with a nearby cycle way. The Wickham Thornes Adventure Woodland project has been developed by Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council with the help of £318,000 of Sports Lottery funding.²⁷⁰ However, the most significant sports and leisure development in the area is the Riverside at Chester-le-Street. This prestigious development on the peninsula formed by the River Wear adjacent to Chester-le-Street, will provide sports pitches, an athletics track, a sports pavilion and a cricket club to host Durham County games. Moreover, the existing Riverside Gardens, Donald Owen Clark Centre, Rowing Club and Rugby Club have been refurbished and enhanced with 30 acres of newly planted woodland interspersed with meadows and a riverside walk.

Quantitative Measures

Some difficulties have been encountered in collecting data about the GNF, mainly because the criteria for monitoring progress were not properly in place until some time after the formal start of the implementation phase in 1993. This is clear from comments in the 1994 Forest Plan that 'it will be important to identify appropriate performance indicators...against which to assess progress and from which to review the effectiveness of the policy'.²⁷¹ Moreover, the CC's 1997/98 Monitoring Report explained that full scale monitoring of the implementation of the CFs did not officially start until 1st April 1995. The Report continued that 'problems of data collection and definition of data are still being resolved' and that this had 'hindered the...project teams' ability to set up comprehensive data collection systems with partners', leaving some figures subject to verification.²⁷² Obtaining information from some of the participating public bodies has also been

²⁷⁰ CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), p.12.

²⁷¹ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.17.13, p.101. Also see p.90.

²⁷² CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), Appendix B, para.1.10, p.2.

a problem since not all were as open as might be expected in a community programme. Moreover, the absence of regularly published annual reports from the GNF Project Team has made assessment especially difficult.²⁷³ The progress made in establishing the GNF in its first five years of operation is, therefore, largely based on the information contained on the CC's 1997/98 annual monitoring report.

The CC's monitoring reports primarily concern the progress of the CF programme as a whole for each reporting year and this again presents some difficulties for assessing the GNF. First, not all the information is broken down to show the progress of individual CFs and, secondly, most of the information is given in annual form with little cumulative data presented to show the progress that has been made since the programme began. The cumulative data concerning the progress of the GNF from 1991²⁷⁴ to 1997/98 are given in Table 1. However, they only relate to the first six of the seven monitoring indicators identified by the DETR and MAFF. Figures for the remaining indicator (the amount of private and voluntary sector support) and the other data requested by the DETR and MAFF (non-forestry funding, community involvement and the cost of the forest teams) are not given in this cumulative fashion. Table 1 shows that considerable progress has been made in establishing the Forest. Astonishingly targets have not been agreed for several of the activities, making it difficult to assess whether progress has been satisfactory, but where targets have been given they have been exceeded. However, performance measures like these are only a crude measure of what is being undertaken in the GNF and some analysis is required. It is impossible adequately to consider performance against all indicators and, therefore, the level of woodland creation has been chosen for analysis. Nevertheless, this will help to illustrate the complex activity underlying the figures and the difficulties in interpreting such crude measures.

²⁷³ Annual reports are prepared by the project teams of many of the CFs and it was anticipated that they would be prepared for the GNF (see Memorandum of Agreement for the GNF 1993-96, para.8.1, p.10.). However, only one has been produced since 1991 despite repeated claims from the Project Director that these were in preparation.

²⁷⁴ The CC claim that the Project Team's activities began to have an impact from 1991 which is why this date has been chosen rather than the formal start of the implementation phase in 1993.

Table 1: Cumulative Data for the GNF from 1991 to 1997/98

Indicator	Total (a)	Target (b)	Notes (c)
Area of woodland planted (Tables 1 & 2)	476.6ha	425ha	11% of the total of 4000ha to be planted
Woodland brought under management (Table 10)	578.9ha	N/A	51.5% of existing woodland
Woodland opened for rec- reation & access (Table 11)	678.9ha	N/A	38.6% of existing woodland
Non-woodland area newly opened for recreation & access (Table 13)	101.0ha	N/A	
Rights of way brought into good condition (Table 14)	162.4km (est)	N/A	37.3% of existing right of way
Non-woodland habitat created/managed (Table 15)	375.6ha	200ha	17 fold increase on that existing in 1991/92
Hedgerow created/managed (Table 17)	>35km	15km	Approx.44 fold increase on that existing in 1991/92
Derelict land reclaimed (Table 18)	75.4ha	N/A	16.9% of total derelict land

Notes:

1. Data is from Appendix A of the CC's Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998).
2. Column (a) relates the cumulative totals of work undertaken in the GNF area since 1991.
3. Column (b) relates to targets for progress until the year 2000, in some cases given as the 5 year target 1995-2000.
4. Column (c) provides additional information for comparative purposes.

Woodland creation is clearly of central importance to the Project. It is the only activity for which targets are given in the Forest Plan and heads the list of monitoring indicators laid down by the DETR and MAFF. Some 476.6ha of woodland was planted in the Forest area between 1991 and 1997/98, out of the 4,000ha expected to be created in the lifetime of the Project. This exceeds both the 375ha planned for the first five years of the Project to 1998,²⁷⁵ and the year 2000 target. However, woodland was being created by local authorities and others in

²⁷⁵ The targets for woodland creation in the first five years of implementation are 75ha/year. GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.17.5, p.98.

the area at a rate of 20ha/year²⁷⁶ before the establishment of the Project Team. If this had continued from 1991 onwards, it would have contributed 140ha of woodland to the Forest area by 1998. The Project Team's activities can, therefore, be said to have contributed an additional 235ha of woodland to the area that would have been planted by local authorities, increasing woodland creation by 67%. Nonetheless, the 1997/98 monitoring report did point out that 'public authorities still account for the largest area of new planting' in the CF programme as a whole.²⁷⁷ So whilst the rate of woodland creation has been increased by the establishment of the Project Team, planting is not yet being undertaken by the private and voluntary sectors to the degree anticipated. Rather, as council officers commented, local authorities are being pressured into undertaking most of the woodland creation.

The contribution made by local authorities and other public bodies towards woodland creation remains disproportionate five years into the life of the Project. Despite repeated requests, the specific amount of woodland planted by local authorities in the GNF area could not be provided by the Project Director. However, a document obtained via a local councillor in the areas suggests that local authorities planted 243ha of trees and shrubs between 1991 and 1995 alone, under the Forestry Authority's WGS (see Appendix 5). Although this figure may be subject to revision, it constitutes a significant 57% of the total planting undertaken between 1991 and 1998. Moreover, the 1997/98 Monitoring Report shows that 85.4% of the Woodland Grant Scheme approvals (an indication of the desire to plant trees in the future) in the GNF lay with local authorities and other public bodies.²⁷⁸ There is a clear difficulty here because a mere 15% of the GNF land area is in the hands of local authorities and other public bodies, the larger part being privately owned.²⁷⁹

Although woodland creation is but a small, though important, part of the GNF Project, analysis of the monitoring data illustrates the

²⁷⁶ This is the baseline figure for planting per hectare in the area before the Project started. CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), Appendix A, Table 2, p.2.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., para.2.2.3, p.7.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., Appendix A, Table 7, p.8.

²⁷⁹ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.4.15, p.15 & para.16.6, p.91.

difficulties of interpreting such crude measures and raises two important questions. First, from the available figures it is unclear which bodies have been responsible for woodland creation up to 1998 and, therefore, which should be credited. It may be that increases in tree planting were the result of the establishment of the GNF Project Team. However, it appears that the bulk of planting is still being undertaken by local authorities and other public bodies, albeit at a higher rate than previously. Secondly, the long term future of the Project may be questionable because, unless landowners in the private sector can be encouraged to undertake more planting, it is likely to 'run out of steam', as one local authority officer put it. Although the CC argue that they are simply 'pump priming' the Project there appears to be little evidence that the private sector is taking up the mantle of woodland creation to the degree required.

FUNDING COSTS

It would be fair to say that the CC's annual monitoring reports tend to concentrate on the outputs of the programme, the only cost data specifically requested by the DETR and MAFF concerning 'non-forestry funding benefiting the forest' and the 'costs of the core forest teams'.²⁸⁰ The CC claim that the reports are an assessment of activities undertaken in each Forest area which contribute to the goal of creating better environments by developing multipurpose forests. This is effectiveness - the extent to which objectives are achieved - and does not properly attend to other aspects of value for money like efficiency - the relationship between input and outputs - and economy - minimising the consumption of resources. If managerial accountability is to operate adequately in the CF programme, economy and efficiency must be considered alongside effectiveness, and the importance of funding costs in this process cannot be overstated.

Unfortunately, like much of the information in the CC's monitoring reports, the cost of funding the CFs is not presented in a clear and systematic fashion and this presents some difficulties in assessing value for money. For example, cumulative figures are not given for total costs of each Forest or for the whole programme since implementation. Annual

²⁸⁰ See CC, Monitoring Report for 1997/1998, (1998), p.24 and Appendix A, Table 21, p.22.

costs are given, but in some cases they are broken down into spending in each CF area, and in others they are presented as a figure for the programme as a whole. Moreover, there is no total annual cost, including all receipts, for the individual Forests or for the whole programme. The cost of administering the GNF will, therefore, be assessed, first, by considering the limited annual funding data available for the Project, which mainly relate to forestry related activities. Secondly, as far as it can be ascertained, the annual funding of the entire CF programme (including forestry and non-forestry activities) will be presented and discussed.

Cost of the GNF

The available information about the annual cost of administering the GNF in funding terms in 1997/98 is summarised in Table 2 below. The largest item was funding for the reclamation of derelict land, but this figure may be unreliable because English Partnership, the body responsible for grant aided reclamation, was not able to provide accurate details, and because some information about grant aided projects may not have been recorded.²⁸¹

Table 2: GNF Funding Data 1997/98

Source of Funding	Cost/annum (£)
Woodland Grant Scheme (Appendix A, Table 8)	108,100
Reclamation Grants (Appendix A, Table 18)	603,700
Sponsorship & Donations (Appendix A, Table 19)	34,000
Secondments (Appendix A, Table 19)	51,000
Land transfers (Appendix A, Table 19)	5,000
Land acquisitions (Appendix A, Table 19)	228,000
Landfill tax (Appendix A, Table 19)	457,000
Project Team salaries & support costs (Appendix A, Table 21)	91,400
Total	1,578,200

Notes:

Data from CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998).

²⁸¹ Ibid., para.7.1.2, p.19.

The figures also show a significant amount of funding for woodland creation from the FC's Woodland Grant Scheme. However, other woodland funding from the MAFF's Farm Woodland Premium Scheme is not clearly recorded and neither is funding from the CC's Countryside Stewardship Scheme.²⁸² The inaccuracy or absence of funding information presents some difficulties for the estimation of the GNF's cost and this is compounded by the classification of some funding items in the CC's monitoring reports. A case in point is 'private and voluntary sector support' which includes sponsorship and donations, support in kind, secondments, land transfers, land acquisitions, and landfill tax.²⁸³ The origins of these funds are not made clear and may give a misleading impression of the support for the GNF from the private and voluntary sectors. The CC say that land acquisitions refers to land which has come into the hands of Project's partners to be specifically used for Forest development, and land transfers concern land swapped between owners in the GNF area. However, it is unclear whether land acquisitions or land transfers can properly be considered as gifts from the private or voluntary sectors to the GNF.

Landfill Tax was the second largest funding item for the Project in 1997/1998 and represented a significant source of funds for the CFs.²⁸⁴ However, it represents an even more complex example of the way that the CC's monitoring reports may mislead. Since 1996, landfill operators have been liable for tax on their activities which is collected through HM Customs and Excise. However, these companies can contribute an amount up to 20% of their annual tax liability to bodies undertaking environmental projects in the vicinity of the landfill site like the GNF. The landfill operators can claim back 90% of the contributions made as tax credits through ENTRUST, a private-sector not-for-profit company approved by HM Customs and Excise. The remaining 10% can be paid to the landfill companies by a third party,²⁸⁵ and all contributions offset

²⁸² Ibid., p.5 & Appendix A, Table 8, p.9, Table 18, p.19 & Table 16, p.17.

²⁸³ Ibid., p.21 & Appendix A, Table 19, p.20. No support in kind was received by the GNF in 1997/98.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., para.8.1.1, p.21- p.22.

²⁸⁵ ENTRUST, 'Procedure for Enrolment and Project Approval Applications' & 'Interpretations & Precedents of the Landfill Tax Regulations', (1998), section 1, p.1 & section 49, p.7.

against Corporation Tax.²⁸⁶ Moreover, landfill operators may gain indirect benefits from an improved environmental image, reduced criticism from environmental groups, and 'better prospects of getting planning permissions for new landfill sites'.²⁸⁷

The Landfill Tax Credit Scheme, as it is known, puts the public and private sectors in close proximity and, given the benefits for landfill operators, hardly represents the benevolence that the CC's monitoring reports suggest. Landfill Tax Credits can be considered as subsidies and a burden to the taxpayer, because they 'represent expenditure forgone which could [have] become available for spending elsewhere or for reducing taxation'.²⁸⁸ Nonetheless, the contributions made by landfill operators to environmental bodies are not considered as ever having been public money, yet they are offset against the Landfill Tax paid to the Treasury through HM Customs and Excise. Moreover, because they are not regarded as public money the 'contributions are available for being matched by European, Central Government or...Millennium or Lottery Commission funding', according to ENTRUST.²⁸⁹ This is a curious and complex arrangement in which the true cost to the public of environmental projects like the GNF is significantly understated, whilst the reputations of private sector companies are enhanced and support for environmental projects by landfill companies is overblown.

Private and voluntary sector support is variously attributed to receipts from local businesses and the local community indicating 'that there is strong support for the Community Forest programme in the local community', according to the Monitoring Report, and that 'support is growing as the programme becomes more established'.²⁹⁰ Funding certainly includes sponsorship & donations, support in kind, &

²⁸⁶ ENTRUST, 'Interpretations & Precedents', (1998), section 59, p.9.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., section 52, p.8.

²⁸⁸ Subsidies can be defined in strict public expenditure terms as 'unrequited current payments related to the provision of a good or service'. But could include 'tax exemptions, and capital grants and other expenditure, for example on transport infrastructure, provision of insurance cover, research and publicity'. British Government Panel on Sustainable Development, Third Report: January 1997, (London: DoE, 1997), pp.12-13.

²⁸⁹ ENTRUST, 'Interpretations & Precedents', (1998), section 44, p.7.

²⁹⁰ CC, Monitoring Report for 1997/1998, (1998), p.21.

secondments which may be considered gifts from various sectors of the community at large. However, whilst land transfers, land acquisitions, and particularly landfill tax, may in strict terms be said to represent support from the local community they are funds which may otherwise have accrued to the public sector.²⁹¹ If these items are excluded, private and voluntary sector support accounts for a mere 5.4% of total funding figure, surprisingly low for a Project based on partnership.

The cost of funding the GNF in 1997/98 seems large at £1,578,200 and this may be an underestimate of the actual cost. Although some of this funding was contributed by the private and voluntary sectors (properly sponsorships and donations, secondments and benefit in kind) by far the largest proportion, £1,493,200, was public sector funding. This can usefully be compared to the FC's 1994 cost-benefit analysis of the Project which suggested a medium term discounted net present value of £15.3 million over the lifetime of the Project.²⁹² Although this figure may need to be adjusted for inflation, the funding cost of the GNF of around £1.5 million per year seems high and could escalate to £45-£75 million over the 30-50 year lifetime of the Project. This suggests that significant benefits must be found to justify the cost of funding the Project.

Cost of the CF Programme

Given the limitations of the available funding data for the GNF, it is worth briefly considering the funding of the CF programme as a whole to provide a more accurate picture of overall costs. The CC's estimates for 1997/98 are summarised in Table 3 and show the cost of implementing the programme to be astonishingly high at just over £74 million. It includes a substantial amount of non-forestry funding from, for example, the RDC, the Single Regeneration Budget, the EU and, most significantly, £56,871,000 (92.5% of the total) from the National

²⁹¹ When questioned on 17/11/98, a CC representative said that this may have been the result of ENTEC, the body which prepared the 1997/1998 Report, misunderstanding the criteria for including data under the heading of private & voluntary sector support.

²⁹² Cost-benefit analysis is a method of appraising an investment project by comparing all social and financial costs and benefits, as far as they can be determined. Present value is the discounted value of a financial sum arising at some future period. These figures are from CC, Community Forests: Briefing Document, (1995), para.8, p.12.

Lottery.²⁹³ Non-forestry funding may be for economic regeneration which, although not primarily related to forest creation, is considered an integral part of the programme's objectives. However, there is no clear separation of funding according to use and some woodland creation projects, like the Woodland Trust's 'Woods on Your Doorstep' scheme and the 'Millennium Forest' project are confusingly included in non-forestry funding.²⁹⁴ In addition, a considerable amount of funding was itemised as 'support from the community', yet, as discussed earlier, very little of this can properly be considered as such. Even excluding community support, the CF programme represents an enormous cost to the public sector and, at this rate of spend, funding could easily exceed £3 billion over its lifetime.

Table 3: Global Annual Cost Data 1997/98

Funding Source	Cost/annum (£)
WGS establishment grants & supplements (Table 2.2, p.5)	1,166,000
Support from the community (Table 8.1, p.21)	7,783,500
Non-forestry funding (Table 9.1, p.24)	61,484,000
Land Reclamation Grants (Appendix B, Table 18)	1,790,900
Project Team costs (Appendix B, Table 21)	1,848,000
Total costs	74,072,400

Notes:

1. This data is taken from the CC's Monitoring Report for 1997/1998, (1998), as indicated.
2. Data excludes some costs, like the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

OUTCOMES AND DIFFICULTIES

Although funding costs are considered by the CC, the emphasis of monitoring of the CF programme tends to be towards effectiveness - the extent to which objectives are achieved. However, effectiveness can be defined in a broader way than just the intended consequences of the programme. The effects of an activity are the outputs, or 'the units of goods and services produced by a project, programme or policy'. However, outcomes which are 'the direct and measurable consequences' on those

²⁹³ It should be noted that £45 million of the National Lottery funding granted for the CF programme in 1997/98, was spent on CFs other than the GHF. CC, Monitoring Report for 1997/1998, (1998), para.9.1.3, p.24. Also letter from Bowman, DETR, 1/12/98.

²⁹⁴ CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), paras.9.1.1. & 9.1.5, p.24.

involved or with an interest, but which are external to the activity itself, need also to be considered. Effectiveness also includes the impact of an activity and 'the ultimate policy effects of a project, programme or policy', encompassing abstract notions like changes in quality of life.²⁹⁵ Moreover, the term effectiveness in all its guises - outputs, outcomes and impact - is frequently taken to refer to intended or desirable effects, but can be extended to unintended and undesirable effects, dysfunctional effects, even desirable effects that may not have been specifically intended or intended effects that are not desirable.²⁹⁶ It is worth considering some of the broader aspects of the GNF Project that may not have been intended or be desirable. These might be called difficulties and can be separated into two broad but interconnected areas. The first concerns funding of the GNF, and the second relates to land and planning.

Funding

The funding required to successfully implement the CF programme has been a concern since the announcement of the initiative in 1989. The programme was to be led by grants and other economic incentives from central government and a sum of £20-25 million was expected to be needed for each Forest. However, the £70 million that the Government initially put towards the programme was considered insufficiently generous.²⁹⁷ Furthermore, concerns about funding were expressed in the Forest Plan, prepared for the GNF and published in 1994, which stated that:

It is not clear whether currently available grants, programmes and other incentives will be sufficient to generate the required scale of change...Research suggests that substantial additional funding may still be required and it will therefore be important to assess the anticipated overall cost of the Forest against existing resources to identify at an early stage what further assistance may be necessary to ensure success.²⁹⁸

Local authorities have until 1998 carried the burden of developing

²⁹⁵ Glynn, Gray & Jenkins, 'Auditing the Three Es', (1992), p.59.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., p.60.

²⁹⁷ See Michael McCarthy, 'Forests to restore urban fringe', *The Times*, 26/7/89, & Peter Brimacombe, 'They have branches everywhere', *Daily Telegraph*, 23/2/91, for example.

²⁹⁸ GNF, *Forest Plan*, (1994), para.17.1, p.98.

the GNF and have found funding shortages particularly acute. Funding constraints imposed by central government have limited the ability of local authorities to pursue the GNF's objectives and drawn comments that 'the Project is laudable, but without cash it will not progress'. Some council employees believed that the Project should be funded through direct grants from central government but that does not conform to the Government's rationale of the CF idea. Some local authorities have also found it difficult to secure the matching funds needed to receive grants from the EU, the National Lottery and so on. The introduction of the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and the classification of contributions to environmental bodies as private funding has undoubtedly eased this situation, but this is of little help to local authorities which are specifically excluded from being treated as environmental bodies.²⁹⁹ Moreover, local authorities are constrained by the EU's development grants which are restricted to spending on infrastructure and job creation, and not forest creation.

It is undoubtedly true that the CC and FC have also faced financial constraints and may have been unable to fund the CF programme as they might have wished. However, significant extra money has been made available for the development of the CFs through the Landfill Tax, for example, which has benefitted forest related activities like woodland creation and management, and hedgerow planting for the CF programme.³⁰⁰ The funding of non-forestry related activities, loosely termed economic regeneration and including heritage and sports projects, has also significantly increased through National Lottery funding.³⁰¹

Despite the CF programme being planned as a partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors, it remains primarily funded and implemented by the public sector. With regard to the GNF, the business community was to 'give practical and financial support', but finding support from business has been difficult. The Forest Advisory Forum noted in 1994 that 'a cautious approach has been taken in building links with

²⁹⁹ ENTRUST, 'Interpretations & Precedents', (1998), section 78, p.11.

³⁰⁰ CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), Summary & para. 8.1.1, p.21.

³⁰¹ Ibid., Summary & p.24.



the private sector',³⁰² suggesting that this was not entirely unexpected. It was noted by local authorities that few businesses in the GNF area were in a position to support the Project either because of the economic climate of the mid-1990s, or because they already had difficulty in simply surviving in depressed areas like the north-east of England. Moreover, local authorities did not consider it cost-effective to 'chase' companies for money for the Forest and neither did they see any clear economic benefits that would, in the short term, attract funding from businesses.

Some funding has been provided by the private and voluntary sectors and the CC said in their 1996/97 Monitoring Report that there had been 'a slight increase in support from the private and voluntary sectors' during the year.³⁰³ Their Report the following year stated that: 'The level of funding received from businesses and the local community has increased year on year' and that this source of funding had increased by 400% since 1994/1995, 'indicating that there is strong support for the...programme in the community, and that support is growing as the programme becomes more established'.³⁰⁴ However, much of this improvement can be attributed to the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme rather than increased interest from the private and voluntary sectors. If landfill tax contributions are excluded, actual funding from the community declined by 3% in 1997/98.³⁰⁵ The CC claims that the object at this early stage is merely to 'pump-prime' the programme, but there is an appreciable danger that the cost to the Treasury will spiral upwards. This is primarily because of difficulties in finding private and voluntary sector funding to take over from that of the public sector, but also because the classification of Landfill Tax and some other funding contributions as private rather than public sector funding may lead to an underestimate of the public cost.

³⁰² GNF, Forest Advisory Forum Report, (26/7/94), paras.66-67, p.12.

³⁰³ CC & FC, Monitoring Report 1996/1997, (Cheltenham: CC, 1997), section 8, p.5.

³⁰⁴ CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), Summary.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., para.8.1.1, p.21.

Land Use and Planning

Land use and planning are closely linked and particularly so in CFs. The success of the programme relies on forest plans being included in relevant local authority plans which dictate future developments. The tree belts produced by CFs can act as a restraint on urban expansion and rural development comparable to green-belts, albeit in a less permanent way. Local authorities, with responsibility for the planning system, use CFs as an additional tool to control development. As one council officer in the GNF area noted during this research, the Forest will allow a 'period of settlement and consolidation of past developments which were, perhaps, not so well organised and planned'.

The planning system can also be used by local authorities as an incentive for the establishment of CFs in a process often called 'planning gain'. Here planning permission for housing or some other development is given by a local authority on condition that additional work of benefit to the CFs is undertaken by the landowner or developer. The danger of this activity is that it is open to corruption and planning gain caused some concern in the DoE (now the DETR) in 1996 because of its increased use by councils with financial difficulties as a means of getting public works done by developers.³⁰⁶ Planning gain also caused some confusion amongst council officers in the GNF area in the mid-1990s, and differing views were held about its ethic and legality. At least one council used it as a bargaining tool for Forest development, but an officer from another council believed that the DETR might 'frown upon the idea'.

Planning gain was accepted in 1997 and the DoE (now DETR) published a circular stating that 'Planning obligations have a positive role to play in the planning system', but warned that 'such arrangements must be operated in accordance with the fundamental principle that planning permission may not be bought or sold'.³⁰⁷ It has also been used as an incentive to encourage landfill operators to take part in the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme, as noted earlier. However, developers can also benefit from the complex administrative arrangements of the Project. One council

³⁰⁶ Sarah Boseley, 'Hard up councils cash in on developers' home plans', The Guardian, 22/6/96.

³⁰⁷ DoE, Circular 1/97, Planning Obligations, (London: The Stationery Office, 1997), para.B7, p.8 & para.6, p.1.

officer, for example, commented that developers tend to exploit the fragmented Forest development system by bartering with the Project Team over tree planting, then use agreements made to pressure local authorities into granting planning permission for, say, housing.

Conversely, and despite the obvious benefits open to developers, some landowners in the Forest area did express concerns about the planning system and local authority planners. A representative of landowners said that whilst he didn't wish compulsion to be used to further the Forest development, the constraints of the planning system were a problem. He suggested that it might be useful to include a tree planting element into the local planning process to allow more bargaining to occur. Yet it is unclear whether this alone would encourage farmers to participate in the Project because of the considerable reduction in land value that accompanies tree planting. This point was noted by a representative of landowners and the 1994 Forest Plan noted that: 'It remains to be seen whether existing incentives can compete with more intensive agricultural returns or speculative land values'³⁰⁸

Farmers and other landowners, including local authorities, may thus be resistant to participating in the CFs because of land value speculation. A piece of land may have a clear value based on its current use, say, for agriculture, but that value may increase if agricultural grants are improved. Moreover, land may be classified as suitable for more lucrative uses like housing, opencast mining or landfill at some future date, again increasing its value. In some cases like housing, the value of the land may increase further if the area has also been enhanced by tree planting. What is termed as 'hope value' reflects this potential increase in land value, as does 'option value' which refers to the potential for exploiting the land at some time in the future.³⁰⁹ Farmers and other landowners are understandably reluctant to commit land

³⁰⁸ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.16.17, p.92.

³⁰⁹ Option value can be defined as 'the value of the environment as a potential benefit as opposed to actual present use value' or 'a willingness to pay for the preservation of an environment against some probability that the individual will make use of it at a later date'. Pearce, Markandya & Barbier, Blueprint for a Green Economy, (1989), p.60.

to a long term crop like trees because of these phenomena.³¹⁰ Moreover, the increased public access required by some grants also presents a further disincentive for landowners.

The difficulty of encouraging farmers to plant trees must be of particular concern to those responsible for implementing the CF programme. Some 50% of the land in the GNF area is under some form of agricultural management and farmers, therefore, have a major role to play in making it a success. However, in the reporting year 1996/1997, the CC noted that in the CF programme as a whole: 'Only 12% of the total area of new woodland planting was entered into the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme' (the grant administered by MAFF and aimed at farmers); and only 13% of Woodland Grant Scheme applications (the grant administered by the Forestry Authority and also aimed at farmers) were from the farming sector. The CC concluded that: 'In the current business environment, planting trees on farmland is a difficult objective to realise'.³¹¹ A year later, and after further decline in farm incomes, the CC still noted that:

Achieving large areas of tree planting on farmland has proved difficult, often because the returns from forestry are not comparable with the returns from agriculture particularly in the short term.³¹²

The resistance of landowners and, particularly, farmers to participate in the CF initiative have, until now, not presented too many difficulties because local authorities have led the way and committed large areas of land to Forest development. However, local authorities only own around 15% of the land in the GNF area and this has led to comments from council representatives that the suitable land for development is becoming short: 'We are nearing the end of the easy bit', said one councillor, 'the next step is much more difficult because it requires landowners to accept a change of use of land'. Compulsory

³¹⁰ Several council officers in the GNF area commented about the difficulties associated with hope and option value and the point was also noted by the CC in their Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), para.2.2.3, p.7.

³¹¹ CC, Monitoring Report 1996/1997, (1997), section 2, p.3 & section 10, p.5.

³¹² CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), para.10.1.5, p.26.

purchase has been ruled out³¹³ and the identification by local councils of suitable privately owned land is time consuming, expensive and often impossible, due to the lack of ownership records in many areas. Several participants in the GNF highlighted this problem in the mid-1990s. It is 'running out of steam' said one, and another said that it 'was a great idea that was floundering'. Nothing seems to have changed by 1997/98 to significantly alter that view.

4.4. MANAGERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY CONSIDERED

Managerial accountability brings together several of the doctrines of NPM to deal with the difficulties presented by traditional concepts of ministerial accountability. It attempts to provide ministers with an appropriate framework for them to devote more time and energy to the role of chief executives of their departments. The key features of NPM are the devolution of responsibility to manageable public sector units, and clear statements of the responsibility for those units. In this way, it is claimed, responsibility can be delegated whilst retaining accountability with ministers. However, whilst this approach may improve a minister's ability to oversee the units for which he is accountable, it is a complex process and presents particular difficulties for controlling the implementation of the programmes and projects based on partnerships between a multiplicity of public, private and voluntary sector bodies.

DEVOLVING RESPONSIBILITY

The creation of manageable units within the public sector has, arguably, increased the flexibility of government and enabled partnership approaches to be adopted in the implementation of programmes like the CF programme. Smaller units with increased freedom from hierarchical control are more able to work with other units in the public sector, and with the private and voluntary sectors. The aim is to increase responsiveness and improve the value for money obtained by the public sector through joint administration. In these circumstances, there is more need to identify responsibility and enforce accountability because of the close relationships developed with the private and voluntary sectors. However, rather than improve clarity, the increased complexity of the partnership

³¹³ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), Statement of Understanding, p.111.

arrangement appears to make responsibility and accountability more confused and confusing.

First, many public sector units are involved in implementing the GNF and, though these units are accountable upwards to ministers, the route is often convoluted and many departments may be involved leaving no single minister in overall control. Secondly, responsibility for funding is often separated from responsibility for action within the programme and, in the case of the GNF, the Project Team largely acts 'as a catalyst for the actions of others'.³¹⁴ Whilst the Project Team is responsible for attracting funds to the Project from other public sector bodies (and others), it has little control over the raising or spending of those funds. Both of these features of the GNF Project were identified in the previous chapter. However, the difficulties presented by the fragmented approach towards implementation are highlighted when the Project's success is considered. This is because managerial accountability also depends on large amounts of information being provided to ministers from these many disparate bodies so that performance can be assessed and value for money obtained.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

General Difficulties

There are a number of difficulties in the application of performance measurement to the CF programme which are general in nature and may be relevant to other areas of the public sector. First, as John Stewart and Kieron Walsh have pointed out, the development of performance management is based on the assumption that 'managers can be given clearly understood tasks, performance targets to achieve, and be accountable for the use of resources to achieve those tasks'.³¹⁵ However, public administration is a complex area of management where multiple objectives may exist and, in the absence of the profit motive, objectives are often difficult to define.³¹⁶ The public sector cannot be easily reduced to a set of targets and neither can a sufficient range of performance

³¹⁴ Letter from Bowman, DETR, 1/12/98.

³¹⁵ John Stewart & Kieron Walsh, 'Change in the Management of Public Services', Public Administration, (1992), Vol.70, No.4, p.513.

³¹⁶ Greenwood & Wilson, Public Administration in Britain Today, (1989), p.130.

measures be drawn up to adequately describe its extent and diversity. Moreover, public administration is greatly influenced by the political environment in which it operates and the emphasis given to goals, objectives and targets may vary according to political priorities and constraints of the day.

Secondly, goals and objectives often relate to qualitative as well as quantitative changes. This is particularly true for the CF initiative which aims to 'create better environments for people to use, cherish and enjoy' through the creation of multipurpose forests.³¹⁷ The value to society of objectives like an 'attractive and diverse landscape' or a 'high quality environment'³¹⁸ is not easy to measure. The problem is comparable to that faced by the Roskill Commission in their attempts to place monetary values on imponderables like the quality of Norman architecture, open countryside and peaceful Sunday afternoons.³¹⁹ The difficulties of measuring the qualitative benefits of the CF programme are accepted by the CC which points out that: 'It is difficult to measure, for example, the enjoyment experienced and educational value gained by children in planting trees in their school grounds'.³²⁰ Nonetheless, it represents a serious practical problem for managerial accountability and remains unresolved.

Thirdly, the implementation of some public policies may be difficult to measure and interpret because of the long timescales involved. Again, this is particularly true of the CF programme which is expected to take between 30 and 50 years to develop.³²¹ The GNF Plan notes that: 'It is difficult to be precise about the pattern and rate of development of such a long-term project',³²² and clearly development may not proceed at a linear rate. Moreover, development may be heavily

³¹⁷ CC, Community Forests: Briefing Document, (1995), para.1.8, p.3.

³¹⁸ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.3.9, p.12.

³¹⁹ Report of the Commission of the Third London Airport, The Roskill Report, (London: HMSO, 1972).

³²⁰ CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), Appendix B, para.1.11, p.3.

³²¹ There is some uncertainty about this timescale and it is variously quoted as 30 years [CC, Community Forests: Briefing Document, (1995), para.1.1.3, p.4]; 30-40 years [GNF, Forest Advisory Forum Report, (26/7/94), para.4, p.1]; 35-40 years [GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.17.5, p.98]; and 30-50 years [CC, Community Forest Monitoring Report 1996/1997, (1997), para.1, p.2].

³²² GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), p.90.

influenced by outside variables like the speed of CAP reform or the level of grants offered under different governments. Furthermore, the trees that are planted will take many years to reach maturity so that visual improvements to the environment may not appear for some time, and interest from timber based industries in the forests may not arise for many years.

Specific Difficulties

A number of more specific concerns arise in the monitoring of the GNF resulting from the quality of the information made available to ministers. It is, after all, information that 'brings the machinery of accountability to life', and its quality 'determines the effectiveness of any system of accountability'.³²³ Yet the available data about the GNF, whilst extensive, is also incomplete, fragmented and sometimes misleading. First, the monitoring reports compiled annually by the CC are the major source of information for ministers and these reports contain numerous data about the programme as a whole and about individual CFs. However, the accountable departments of MAFF and the DETR only formally request data on seven indicators and three other measures of the implementation of the initiative. This data mainly concerns the progress that has been made with the programme, that is the outputs of the programme or, more properly, effectiveness. This is curious since managerial accountability encompasses the concept value for money in the public sector. Devolving responsibility and identifying goals, objectives and targets attempts to improve ministerial oversight of departments to ensure that this is achieved. Value for money includes not just effectiveness, but also efficiency and economy (even equity perhaps), yet these matters seem secondary to the main thrust of the monitoring reports.

Secondly, the data is fragmented in the annual monitoring reports and not presented in a systematic way. Some data concerns individual CFs and some the CF programme as a whole, making the comparison of projects difficult. There are particular concerns about the cost of the programme which is difficult to assess because the cumulative cost of funding either individual forests or the whole programme is not recorded. Of

³²³ Day & Klein, Accountabilities, (1987), p.43.

course each participating public body also provides data about its own funding of the programme to ministers, but this cannot provide a clear overview of the programme and less so of individual CFs. Moreover, the complex administrative arrangement does not assist the managerial accountability process because targets often don't exist and where they do it remains unclear who is responsible for hitting them or for progress made towards goals and objectives. Overall, it is difficult to attribute praise if progress has been good, and if progress has been unsatisfactory it is difficult to attribute blame in the partnership arrangement.

Thirdly, the available data is often incomplete because of the number and diversity of objectives to be considered, the problem of collecting the necessary information from such a wide range of bodies, and the difficulties inherent in the assessment of qualitative criteria. Again this may produce a distorted picture of the progress of the GNF and is particularly worrying in the area of costs where no information is collected for a number of grants.

Finally, some of the data made available to ministers through the monitoring reports is confusing and misleading. This is most clearly illustrated in the matter of identifying whether funding has come from the public sector or from the community at large. Land transfers, land acquisitions and, particularly, the recently introduced landfill tax represent a significant proportion of the total cost of administering the CF programme. However, they are identified in the report as private and voluntary sector support, or support from the community. Yet identifying them in this way may mislead ministers about the true cost of the initiative to the public because, properly, they are subsidies, and public sector funding in all but name. That the figures are presented as an indication of 'strong support for the Community Forest programme in the community',³²⁴ suggests, at the very least, an overstatement of the programmes' success. Moreover, the classification of contributions under the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme as private and voluntary sector funding enables the project teams to apply for other public funding where matching funds are required to be found by the applicant. This may lead to serious underestimation of the cost of the initiative to the public.

The cost of implementing the GNF and CF programme is high by any

³²⁴ CC, Monitoring Report 1997/1998, (1998), para.8.1.2, p.21.

standards, but whether it is too high or not high enough is difficult to gauge in the circumstances. Accurate assessment of value for money can be problematic in the public sector but is particularly difficult in the administration of the GNF where managerial accountability is favoured. Ministers, who have a significant role to play in ensuring value for money is obtained, are at a disadvantage because of the complex administrative arrangements. Devolving responsibility makes control of the programme difficult and reliance on performance measurement may compound this, presenting a distorted picture for which there is no corrective. There is no single audit of the whole programme,³²⁵ and the Project Teams are neither statutory bodies nor companies and so there really is no external scrutiny. So whilst the programme may be effective in delivering multipurpose forests in the short run, insufficient private and voluntary sector interest is being generated to take it forward to completion. The cost to the public of supporting the initiative is seriously underestimated and, although it may be effective, it could also be both uneconomic and inefficient. This does not sit well with the value for money ideal and compromises the standards of prudence normally expected in the public sector.

³²⁵ Letter from Bowman, DETR, 1/12/98.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION: COMPLEXITY AND MANAGERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The GNF provides an example of the way in which sustainable development is being implemented in England in the 1990s. Both the process which led to the emergence of the CF programme and the first five years of implementation of the Project have been examined in detail. What has been found is a pluralist policy process resulting in a project based on a community or partnership approach between the public, private and voluntary sectors. Many public bodies, through central to local, have been given a role in the Project, producing a complex and overlapping hierarchical organisational pattern, confusing responsibility and making the enforcement of accountability difficult. Aspects of NPM feature highly in the administration of the Project, leading to an emphasis on managerial accountability rather than traditional forms based on hierarchy. However, difficulties for accountability remain even though the importance of accountability is heightened because of a blurring of the boundaries between the public, private and voluntary sectors arising from the partnership arrangement which has been adopted.

This chapter draws together the salient features of the sustainable development concept with the mode adopted for its implementation, exemplified by the GNF. It is contended that the difficulties of accountability may have serious implications for the success of the GNF Project and the CF programme as a whole, and may also have further consequences for the implementation of sustainable development programmes more generally.

5.2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE GREAT NORTH FOREST PROJECT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

There is a tension between the continued economic growth needed to maintain (if not improve) our standard of life, and the preservation of the environment on which all life depends. This point, noted a century and a half ago by John Stuart Mill, has again come to the fore in recent decades. To ease this tension a concept, not dissimilar to Mill's stationary state, has emerged called sustainable development. Sustainable development was first defined in the 1987 Brundtland Report as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the

ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.³²⁶ However, since then it has been variously redefined to take account of competing views about what constitutes sustainable development and how it can be realised.

In general terms there are two views about how sustainable development can be achieved. The first, propounded by the Brundtland Report, emphasises the political and social dimensions of sustainable development, and highlights the need for citizen participation in the decision making process.³²⁷ According to the Brundtland view, sustainable development is virtuous, and success may depend on 'elevating sustainable development to a global ethic'.³²⁸ Protection of the environment, therefore, requires motives higher than simple personal gain because of the frequent absence of immediate benefits from preserving the environment for a future and unknown society. This fits well with the concept of community which embodies a similar sense of morality³²⁹ and with the communitarian philosophy which has been resurrected in the last decade or so. The Brundtland view of sustainable development, arguably, has overtones of Aristotle's good life in its contribution towards a common good achieved through virtuous action by citizens.³³⁰ In this sense the framework for achieving sustainable development can be compared to idealist concepts of participative democracy exemplified by Mary Parker Follet's New State, amongst others.

The second view of sustainable development can be found in the UK Government's 1990 environmental strategy. Like Brundtland's 'Our Common Future', the similarly titled White Paper, 'This Common Inheritance', is also founded on 'the ethical imperative of stewardship', and sustainable development is correspondingly defined as 'not sacrificing tomorrow's

³²⁶ WCED, Our Common Future, (1989), p.43.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.65.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.308.

³²⁹ See, for example, Mary F. Rousseau, Community: The Tie that Binds, (Lanham, New York & London: University Press of America, 1991), pp.110-111.

³³⁰ Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics, Translated by David Ross, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), Book I, pp.1-27.

prospects for an illusory gain today'.³³¹ However, whilst the Government's strategy claims to provide people with the necessary information for them to make informed choices, the White Paper is suffused with market phraseology. So, whereas the 'responsibility for our environment is shared...It is an obligation on us all' and should become 'an instinctive characteristic of good citizenship', it is also argued that 'market mechanisms offer the prospect of a more efficient and flexible response to environmental issues, both old and new'.³³²

As with the concept of sustainable development itself, there is a tension also in the UK Government's view about how it can be achieved or implemented. Its view invokes a community ideal but one that is significantly different from Brundtland's, and the two views can helpfully be conceived in terms of *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, or community and association, as expounded by Ferdinand Tonnies a century ago.³³³ The Brundtland view of sustainable development conforms more to the *gemeinschaft*, where activity is small in scale, based on cooperation and family life, and where both means and ends are valued. Conversely, the UK Government's view conforms more to the *gesellschaft* where rationality and economics prevail, contracts are the custom and regulation the rule. The Government may be more realistic in its approach; first, because of the theoretical irreversibility of society's movement from *gemeinschaft* towards *gesellschaft*. Secondly, because of the growing international support given to combining citizen participation with market principles in the pursuit of sustainable development, as demonstrated by the Agenda 21 agreement which emerged from the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development.

THE GNF PROJECT

The term sustainable development defies exact definition and, as Pearce, Markandya and Barbier point out: 'There is some truth in the criticism that it has come to mean whatever suits the advocacy of the

³³¹ DoE, This Common Inheritance, (1990), p.10.

³³² *Ibid.*, para.1.38, p.16 & para.1.29, p.14.

³³³ Ferdinand Tonnies, Community and Association, (*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*), [1887], Translated by Charles P. Loomis, (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1955).

individual concerned'.³³⁴ No clear principles exist about how it can best be realised and the newness of the concept means that it is largely untried. However, something can be learned from the programmes and projects that are in progress and this thesis is written with that objective in mind. The case study which has been chosen is the GNF Project; part of the CF programme established in 1989 and a relatively early piece of sustainable development policy to be put into practice in the UK.

The Project has been considered in some detail; first, through the process which led to the emergence of the CF programme and, secondly, through the organisational arrangements supporting the practical implementation of the Project. It is clear that the CF programme resulted from a pluralist process with many competing groups contributing to the multipurpose forestry policy from which the CF initiative sprang. The CF programme is a set of twelve projects and it attempts to respond to changes in public opinion about the environment; reform of agricultural support systems in the European Union, namely the CAP; a shift in forestry policy and a desire to raise woodland coverage in England nearer to European levels; and the need to reclaim derelict industrial land on the urban margins which may then act as a barrier, checking urban expansion.

The CF programme is couched in pluralist terms of community, partnership and participation, and implementation is to be encouraged through persuasion, purchasing and planning. The objectives of the programme are numerous and are aimed at satisfying the demands of many groups with interests in the four policy areas of the programme noted above. However, the process is mainly led by economic instruments in the form of grants from the public sector to pump prime the programme until it becomes self supporting. The implementation of the twelve CF projects, therefore, reflect the Government's general attitude towards sustainable development which looks simultaneously towards both community and the market.

The GNF Project is designed as a partnership and its 'realisation will demand the committed support of key national...and local bodies, together with all sections of the community', according to the Forest

³³⁴ Pearce, Markandya & Barbier, Blueprint for a Green Economy, (1989), p.1.

Plan.³³⁵ Examination of the Project shows that the net is cast widely with a role for central government departments, national agencies, local government, farmers and landowners, the business community, the voluntary sector, and local citizens.³³⁶ Participating bodies are coordinated through a core formal organisation consisting of a Project Team and a number of supporting committees. These are composed of representatives of the principal partners from central government, farming and landowning interests, and the five local authorities in the area which also provide a democratic element to the process.

5.3. ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE GREAT NORTH FOREST PROJECT

Complexity is a notable feature of the process of making and implementing public policy and, according to John McCormick, this is particularly so in the field of environmental policy.³³⁷ The administrative arrangements developed for the implementation of the GNF are complex in two respects. First, whilst the Project Team and its supporting committees provide a formal focus for the Project, there are numerous participating public bodies from all levels from central through to local. The formal organisation merges into a wider organisation composed of organisations of a private and voluntary nature. Moreover, some participating bodies, like the Project's MSG, TECs, Groundwork and Tidy Britain, combine public, private and voluntary features which makes classification difficult. For many, to quote Barker: 'Government departments and "private society" are offered...as the two known entities between which these many organisations are to be found'.³³⁸

Secondly, because the CF programme aims at several policy areas - environmental, agricultural, forestry and urban expansion - the objectives handed down to individual CF projects, like the GNF, are multiple, often change, and appear to vary according to the documents consulted. Between eleven and fourteen objectives were found in three

³³⁵ GNF, Forest Plan, (1994), para.16.23, p.93.

³³⁶ Ibid., pp.93-97.

³³⁷ McCormick, British Politics and the Environment, (1991), pp.13-14.

³³⁸ Barker, 'Governmental bodies and the networks of mutual accountability', in Barker (Ed), Quangos in Britain, (1980), p.5.

documents published from 1994 to 1997.³³⁹ Although, objectives may change in response to experience gained by the organisation and through bargaining and coalition forming by the participants,³⁴⁰ such changes inevitably add to the existing complexity of the arrangements found in this case study.

The complex organisational arrangement of the Project resulting from the close association of public, private and voluntary sectors with widely differing interests, presents some serious difficulties for the accountability. A.H.Birch once said that: 'It is clear that people who regard political responsibility as a virtue want their government to be...responsive to public opinion, to pursue policies which are prudent and mutually consistent, and to be accountable to the representatives of the electors'.³⁴¹ Yet it is far from clear that all these aspects of responsibility are satisfied (or can be satisfied) in the GNF where there is a high degree of complexity and a near fusion of the public with the private and voluntary sectors.

HIERARCHY AND TRADITIONAL METHODS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Although the overall pattern of public administration in the UK has changed significantly in recent decades, hierarchical arrangements remain important. Weber's rational, if highly abstract, theory of bureaucracy which attempted to provide a pattern for administration that was both efficient and under democratic control, remains of profound importance in the study of organisations.³⁴² The classical school, of which Weber is pre-eminent, provides a valuable lesson, according to R.J.S.Baker, in 'the value of definitions of function, authority and responsibility, clear lines of command and control and orderly administrative structures'.³⁴³ Moreover, it continues to provide the framework for the system of public administration in the UK. 'The principles of office

³³⁹ See Chapter 2.

³⁴⁰ Richard M.Cyert & James G.Marsh, 'A Behavioral Theory of Organizational Objectives', from Mason Haire (Ed), Modern Organization Theory, [1959], Reprinted in Jay M.Shafritz & J.Steven Ott, Classics of Organizational Theory, 3rd Edition, (Belmont California: Wadsworth, 1991), pp.133-142.

³⁴¹ Birch, Representative and Responsible Government, (1964), p.20.

³⁴² Baker, Administrative Theory and Public Administration, (1972), p.37.

³⁴³ Ibid., p.186.

hierarchy and of levels of graded authority', said Weber, 'mean a firmly ordered system of super- and subordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones'.³⁴⁴ These hierarchical principles have an important role in the accountability process despite recent reforms. Regarding the GNF, the CC, as an Executive type NDPB with primary responsibility for the Project, remains hierarchically linked to its sponsoring Department, the DETR, despite that it operates at 'arms length from ministers'.³⁴⁵ However, the number of participants and the multiple objectives of the GNF is confusing and there are a number of shortcomings of the hierarchical framework that governs the Project.

First, responsibility and accountability are confused by the mixed membership of the formal organisation arising from the fragmentation of government and the partnership approach which has been adopted for the Project. It is found in the joint arrangements of the Members Steering Group, for example, which brings together representatives of several different public bodies (local authorities, the FC and CC) with those of private landowners (the CLA and NFU). Moreover, mixed membership is found in the way that personnel in some bodies, like the Project Team, are each formally employed and salaried by other organisations, including local councils, government departments, NDPBs, a charity and a voluntary interest group in this case.

Secondly, it is often difficult to identify to whom individuals are accountable because of the multiple accountabilities that exist in the Project. This is most obvious with the Project Team director who is responsible to a host of bodies in different ways: Gateshead MBC as his employer; the Project's locally accountable body, the MSG; the FC and CC as lead organisations of the Project; through the CC to the DETR; to the MAFF which, with the DETR, is responsible for monitoring the progress of the Project; and to the many grant awarding bodies which support the Project.

Finally, accountability is confused by the separation of responsibility for funding from responsibility for the progress and

³⁴⁴ Max Weber, 'Bureaucracy', reprint of *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Edited & Translated by H.H.Gerth & C.Wright Mills, [1946], in Shafritz & Ott, *Classics of Organization Theory*, 3rd Edition, (1991), p.81.

³⁴⁵ Cabinet Office, OPSS, *Public Bodies 1994*, (1995), para.5, p.v.

success of the Project. For example, whilst the Project Team is responsible for securing adequate resources for the Project, it has few resources of its own and little control over the spending of grants that have been awarded to other participating organisations. The role of the Project Team is primarily as a coordinating body, yet it remains responsible for the establishment of the GNF and, in common with other participating public bodies, has responsibilities which are divided to a level of complexity not formerly found in the public sector.

Complex organisations, according to Bovens, are often the result of a combination of two or three of the elements of large scale, bureaucratic structures, and formal status.³⁴⁶ They appear, he says, to have increased in number and social importance in this century and are characterised by 'many different functionaries, at various levels and in various measure', contributing to the policy and decisions of the organisation, making it 'extraordinarily difficult to determine who is responsible for the organisation's conduct in the last instance'.³⁴⁷ Responsibility and accountability pose particular difficulties for complex organisations which are organic in form and extend beyond the boundaries of the formal into a more diffuse wider organisation, as found in the GNF partnership. Moreover, these difficulties have a special significance for the public sector where responsibility and accountability form part of a wider democratic system. There is, in these arrangements, no single person in control and, to paraphrase Mill, no single person who can be given all the credit or all the blame for the Project. It is in this sense that the participating public bodies are 'partially irresponsible',³⁴⁸ a situation that Weber's ideal type bureaucracy sought to avoid.

MANAGERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The reform of government in the UK, particularly since 1979, has tended to focus on the control of resources and the introduction of business methods into the public sector, rather than on the organisation of departments and the machinery of government. This process began in the

³⁴⁶ Bovens, The Quest for Responsibility, (1998), p.10.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., pp.13-4.

³⁴⁸ Birch, Representative and Responsible Government, (1964), p.20.

1960s with the Fulton Committee's investigation into the Civil Service for the then Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Nevertheless, the process was taken much further by Mrs. Thatcher and has continued unabated ever since. The changes that have occurred within government are encapsulated by NPM and reflect both the contemporary, doctrinaire belief in business methods, and the move away from traditional Weberian ideas of administration that emphasised hierarchy and the functional division of tasks. It is argued that NPM deals with the 'constitutional fiction' of ministers being responsible for every action of their department by providing them with the tools to better manage their departments and ensure that value for money is obtained, whilst attending to their preferred role as policy advisers.

It is asserted that NPM systems were introduced as a response to the increasing complexity of government arising from 'the growth in scale and scope of State activity' and the 'perceived lack of control and accountability' that accompanied it.³⁴⁹ The foundations of accountability in the NPM are managerial and require, first, that responsibility for action should be devolved to clearly identified manageable units and, secondly, that those units should have clearly defined objectives and should be assessed according to how well they perform against them. The role of information in the process cannot be overstated. There is more of it for one thing, but more significantly it is also the means by which ministers judge whether value for money - effectiveness, efficiency and economy - has been obtained by the manageable units for which they are accountable. It was, for example, the control of information that lay behind systems, like the management information system for ministers (MINIS), which were put in place following the Rayner scrutinies of 1979 to 1983.³⁵⁰ However, two practical difficulties of applying managerial accountability have been found in this case study. The first concerns the flow of information in the system arising mainly from the organisational structure. The second, the quality of that information resulting from the procedures adopted and influenced by the behaviour of partners in the Project.

³⁴⁹ Neil Carter, Rudolf Klein & Patricia Day, How Organisations Measure Success: The Use of Performance Indicators in Government, (London: Routledge, 1995), p.6.

³⁵⁰ Greenwood & Wilson, Public Administration in Britain Today, (1989), p.125.

Information Flow

Although there is less significance given to hierarchical methods of controlling organisations, hierarchy remains vital for the proper functioning of the public sector. Indeed it is hard to discern any fundamental difference in this respect between the organisational pattern demanded by the NPM and the traditional patterns that it attempts to replace. Weber's need to clearly specify the functions of offices that are themselves arranged in a clear hierarchy, sounds little different from NPM's emphasis on the clear statement of goals and clear assignment of responsibility. Bureaucracies may have become smaller and more fragmented, but hierarchy remains essential for the functional role it plays in providing the conduit through which information in the organisation flows and upon which accountability consequently depends.

This study of the GNF raises important questions about the flow of information in projects which attempt to include community support and are implemented through partnership arrangements. First, the fragmentation of bureaucracies into smaller manageable units with more discretion over their activities means that they frequently operate at arm's length from ministers. Therefore, the lines of responsibility are often longer and more convoluted, impeding the information flow. Secondly, fragmentation also means that there are simply more public bodies to participate in the Project so information may not reach those that need it because of the confusion about who should receive it. For example, there are at least five government departments with an interest in the Project - the FC, DETR, MAFF, DNH and DfEE - and it may be unclear which of them should be informed about certain activities and progress with them.

Information Quality

Although each of the participating public bodies provide information about their activities in the GNF, it is the CC's monitoring reports which provide ministers with the data vital for them to assess performance. These reports, prepared annually, contain information relating to the indicators identified by the DETR and MAFF for monitoring progress in the CFs, together with substantial amounts of other data about the activities undertaken in the forest and their costs. The reports are presented to the relevant ministers at the departments with

responsibility for the CF programme, mainly the DETR and MAFF, for their assessment. However, study of the GNF raises concern about the quality of this information.

First, the monitoring reports are incomplete because, although they contain much other data they mainly focus on seven indicators and three other criteria established by the DFEE and MAFF. Targets have not been properly identified even for these limited activities, a worrying omission. However, of most concern is the way that the monitoring reports primarily attend to outputs, a measure of effectiveness, at the expense of other aspects of value for money. Secondly, the data is fragmented and not presented in a systematic way, making it all but impossible to meaningfully compare progress made with individual forest projects or to estimate the cost incurred. Finally, some of the data in the monitoring reports is confusing to the extent that it may mislead ministers into overestimating the progress made by the project teams, and underestimating the cost to the public of the enterprise.

The complexity, shortcomings and dispersion of information about the GNF also impinges on the openness of the Project because it makes it very difficult for the concerned citizen to establish what is being done. Though there may be no deliberate evasion, concerted effort is required to track down who has the relevant information about an aspect of the Project, secure and then interpret it. This is worrying since much of the reason for waste, extravagance and general overspending found in the Civil Service in the 1970s was attributed to inaction, obfuscation and secrecy. Openness, it was contended was the solution: 'I have learned by experience', said Leslie Chapman in 1978, 'that only if the deficiencies of the Civil Service are made public is there any prospect of change for the better'.³⁵¹ Yet, some 20 years later, it remains difficult for citizens to find out what is being undertaken on their behalf. The irony of this is that the reform of government over that same period has frequently been argued for on the basis of providing more information of better quality to rectify the problems of the past.

³⁵¹ Leslie Chapman, Your Disobedient Servant, (1979), p.7.

5.4. IMPLICATIONS OF NEW SYSTEMS OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In 1994, the Committee of Public Accounts began its report on The Proper Conduct of Public Business by saying that:

In recent years we have seen and reported on a number of serious failures in administrative and financial systems and controls within departments and other public bodies, which have led to money being wasted or otherwise improperly spent. These failings represent a departure from the standards of public conduct which have mainly been established during the past 140 years.³⁵²

Amongst the failures which concerned the Committee were inadequate oversight, lack of clear lines of control and accountability, failure to hold individuals personally accountable for their action, the absence of regular reviews of expenditure programmes, concealing information, and failure in keeping adequate distance from the private sector.³⁵³ These comments echo Leslie Chapman's 1978 analysis and have a resonance with the findings of this case study. There are two reasons for this. First, administration has been complicated by the proliferation of the number and types of public bodies in recent decades. Secondly, the limits of the public sector are blurred by the partial incorporation of the private and voluntary sectors into the public arena. Deficiencies in accountability are of concern in themselves; however, less obvious are the consequences of any shortcomings in accountability. It is argued here that difficulties of accountability restrict organisational learning and adaption, and may divert attention from how best to implement this and other sustainable development projects.

PROLIFERATION

There has been a proliferation of quasi-governmental public bodies in recent decades, arguably because they provide 'a vehicle for the incorporation of "New Public Management", with its alternative modes of accountability, into government'.³⁵⁴ It is claimed that 'their

³⁵² Committee of Public Accounts (PAC), Eighth Report, The Proper Conduct of Public Business, (London: HMSO, 17/1/94), para.1, p.v.

³⁵³ Ibid., Annex 1, pp.vi-viii.

³⁵⁴ David Wilson, 'Quangos in the Skeletal State', F.F.Ridley & David Wilson (Eds), The Quango Debate, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.3.

influence is expanding at every level of government',³⁵⁵ and there is growing concern about the use of these non-elected public bodies in the implementation of public policy. Such changes have, say Howard Davis and John Stewart, influenced the way that local communities are governed, resulting in

a system...in which responsibilities are increasingly fragmented between different agencies and organisations governed by appointed or self-appointed members rather than elected representatives.³⁵⁶

The result is a confused and overlapping arrangement of hierarchies with little by way of democratic foundation. The proliferation of governmental bodies also has implications for coordination or 'the controlling of activities and decisions of individuals or agencies so that they are harmonized in the pursuit of some stated common goal or objective'.³⁵⁷ Poul Meyer has suggested that: 'Lack of co-ordination, or a cumbersome and protracted disintegrated co-ordination, may be the result if proliferation is carried to excess'.³⁵⁸ Although managerial accountability attempts to counteract this by clearly identifying aims and objectives and those responsible for achieving them, this case study suggests that this may not be successful.

The CC's monitoring reports tend to concentrate on the progress that has been made towards the objectives of the Project. Inevitably this leads participants to emphasise the successes by which they are judged and underplay activities that could in any way be interpreted as failure. The monitoring reports, for example, are packed with information, not all of which is entirely relevant to the progress of the Project or requested by the accountable departments. Moreover, successes like tree planting, which has chiefly been undertaken by local authorities and may have occurred in the absence of the CF programme, are often erroneously attributed to the Project Team. These differing accounts of performance

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p.13.

³⁵⁶ Howard Davis & John Stewart, The Growth of Government by Appointment: Implications for Local Democracy, (Luton: Local Government Management Board, 1995), p.3.

³⁵⁷ J.Stanyer & B.Smith, Administering Britain, (London: Fontana, 1976), p.157.

³⁵⁸ Poul Meyer, 'Proliferation of Departments, Terminology of Departmentalization, and History of Regionalism', reprinted from Administrative Organization: A Comparative Study of the Organisation of Public Administration, [1957], in Richard A.Chapman & A.Dunsire (Eds), Style in Administration, (1971), p.385.

are compounded by the difficulties in measuring performance. The monitoring reports do not include all outputs of the Project, nor do they include all the outcomes and unintended consequences whether good or bad. These difficulties in performance measurement raise questions about the functioning of managerial accountability in the GNF because it is not clear that ministers have appropriate or adequate information to oversee the manageable units for which they are responsible.

In addition to objectives, ministers must also attend to goals or higher level activities which may be more general in nature. However, once again the monitoring reports may be inadequate for this purpose because they do not provide the systematic record of both the inputs and outputs of the programme essential for the evaluation of other dimensions of value for money like efficiency and economy. The effect of NPM and managerial accountability appears to be that more attention is given to the achievement of objectives than to the goal of establishing the GNF. Given that the high cost of the Project seems to far outweigh the benefits anticipated by the FC's cost-benefit analysis, economy, arguably, has not been properly considered. Similarly, efficiency is apparently compromised by the inadequate consideration given to whether the partnership approach continues to be superior to other methods like local authority implementation supported by direct grants. Institutional flexibility and capacity for self-correction have particular import in the pursuit of sustainable development³⁵⁹ but may be overlooked in the GNF. As Bertrand Russell once said: 'There can be no final goal for human institutions; the best are those that most encourage progress towards others still better'.³⁶⁰

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Perhaps the most important outcome of this research is that it focuses attention on the way sustainable development policy is being implemented in the UK. There is a clear tension between market and community and this is preserved rather than resolved in the partnership approach. In the partnership approach the tension reappears in the conflict between the public sector need for accountability and the

³⁵⁹ WCED, Our Common Future, (1987), p.65.

³⁶⁰ Bertrand Russell, Political Ideals, [1917], (London: Unwin Hyman, 1977), p.17.

private sector desire for flexibility and entrepreneurship. There are obvious concerns about the proper spending of public money in such an environment because of basic differences in the aims of the public and private sectors. According to the Pearce Report, for example:

Projects in the public sector should be assessed according to the goals and objectives of society as a whole. Projects in the private sector will be evaluated from the shareholder's perspective [and this] raises the possibility that private sector decisions will be incompatible with society's broader goals, that 'private and social profit' will diverge.³⁶¹

Moreover, despite the CC's claim that the Government's intention is to simply pump prime the CF programme, commentators like Marion Shoard are concerned that this will be subverted by private sector interests and negate some potential benefits:

Eventually, foresters could come to take over the claim on the public purse on which farmers have so successfully relied. Many landowners would be delighted to replace CAP-funded barley with taxpayer-funded spruce.³⁶²

Tension in the implementation of sustainable development extends further because of conflict between the market and community action. The *Gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* though 'interwoven in all kinds of associations' are, according to Tonnies, different in essence.³⁶³ In the *Gemeinschaft*, he says, human beings 'remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors, whereas in the *Gesellschaft* they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors'.³⁶⁴ Even the most discursive consideration of rational choice theory suggests that Mancur Olsen's proposition that 'rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests',³⁶⁵ may have particular relevance for the implementation of sustainable development projects like the GNF. It is very likely that the most rational of individuals will be averse to participating because they will receive the benefits of a common good like the Forest anyway - the so-called free-

³⁶¹ Pearce, Markandya & Barbier, Blueprint for a Green Economy, (1989), p.120.

³⁶² Marion Shoard, 'Woodman, spare us this cash demand', The Times, 16/2/91.

³⁶³ Tonnies, Community and Association, [1887], (1955), p.18.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.74.

³⁶⁵ Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action, Second Edition, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971), p.2.

rider problem. People may also refuse to contribute because of the presence of private companies which, they believe, will act in the most rational and self-interested of ways and will take advantage of their voluntary and unpaid work. Furthermore, the complexity and lack of openness of the administrative arrangements found in the GNF may act as a barrier to participation, presenting a real contradiction in the community or partnership model.

In final conclusion it is worth drawing attention to the democratic weaknesses of the current methods of implementing sustainable development. The extensive nature of reforms in government mean, to borrow from Harold Laksi, that 'it is still more urgent that the forms of the state assume such a shape that the power of government, at every point, be made responsible'.³⁶⁶ It is argued that the partnership approach, which plays a significant role in the GNF, has 'served to exacerbate long term trends towards the erosion of local political structures and processes within the British state'.³⁶⁷ The role of accountability is, therefore, not merely to prevent waste, extravagance mismanagement or corruption in the Civil Service, it underpins the democratic foundations of our society. It is vital for ensuring the trust of citizens in their government, that their rights are defended and that they have the confidence to commit themselves to this vitally important area of public policy.

³⁶⁶ Harold J. Laksi, A Grammar of Politics, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1941), p.38.

³⁶⁷ Keith Shaw, 'The Politics of Public-Private Partnership in Tyne and Wear', Northern Economic Review, Summer 1990, No.19, p.8.



COMMUNITY FOREST PROGRAMME IN ENGLAND

The Great North Forest

The Grove
Birtley Lane
Chester-le-Street
County Durham
DH3 1AZ
Tel: 0191 4109066
Fax: 0191 4105357

The Greenwood

198 Beardall Street
Hucknall
Nottingham
NG15 7JU
Tel: 0115 9681006
Fax: 0115 9681787

Forest of Mercia

Rumer Hill Road
Cannock
Staffordshire
WS11 3EX
Tel: 01543 505488
Fax: 01543 504622

Marston Vale

The Forest Office
Broadmead Road
Stewartby
Bedfordshire
MK43 9LZ

Tel: 01234 767037
Fax: 01234 767032

Cleveland

Stewart Park
The Grove, Marton
Middlesbrough
Cleveland
TS7 8AR
Tel: 01642 300716
Fax: 01642 300715

Red Rose

Community Forest Centre
Dock Office
Trafford Road
Salford Quays
Manchester
M5 2XB
Tel: 0161 872 1660
Fax: 0161 872 1680

The Mersey Forest

c/o Riseley Moss Visitors Centre
Ordnance Avenue
Birchwood
Warrington
WA3 6QX
Tel: 01925 816217
Fax: 01925 821793

South Yorkshire

Thorncliffe Park
Chapelton
Sheffield
S30 4PX
Tel: 0114 2571199
Fax: 0114 2571150

Bristol/Avon

PO Box 46
Middlegate, Whitefriars
Lewins Mead
Bristol
BS99 7EU
Tel: 0117 9874984
Fax: 0117 9874978

Watling Chase

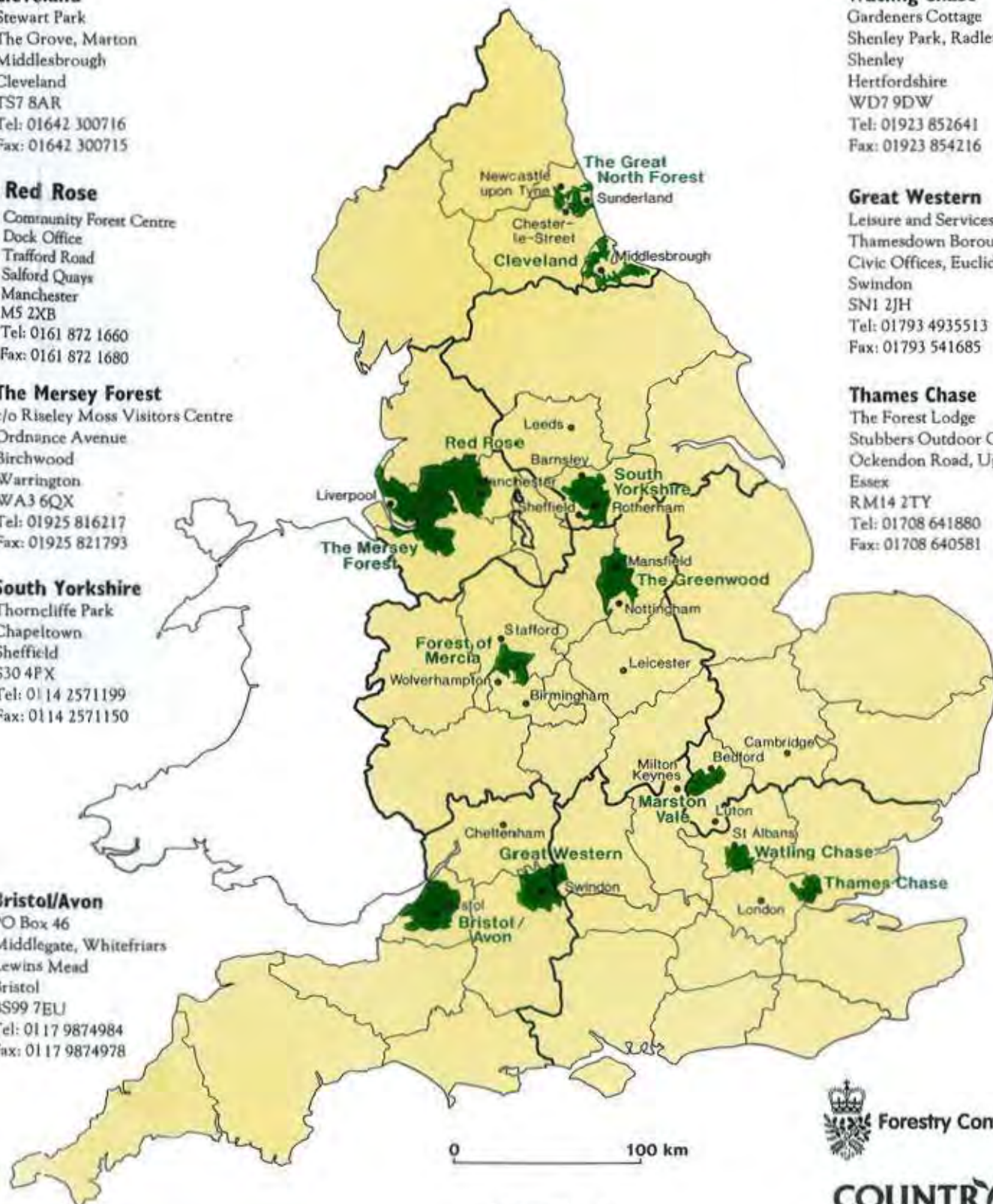
Gardeners Cottage
Shenley Park, Radlett Lane
Shenley
Hertfordshire
WD7 9DW
Tel: 01923 852641
Fax: 01923 854216

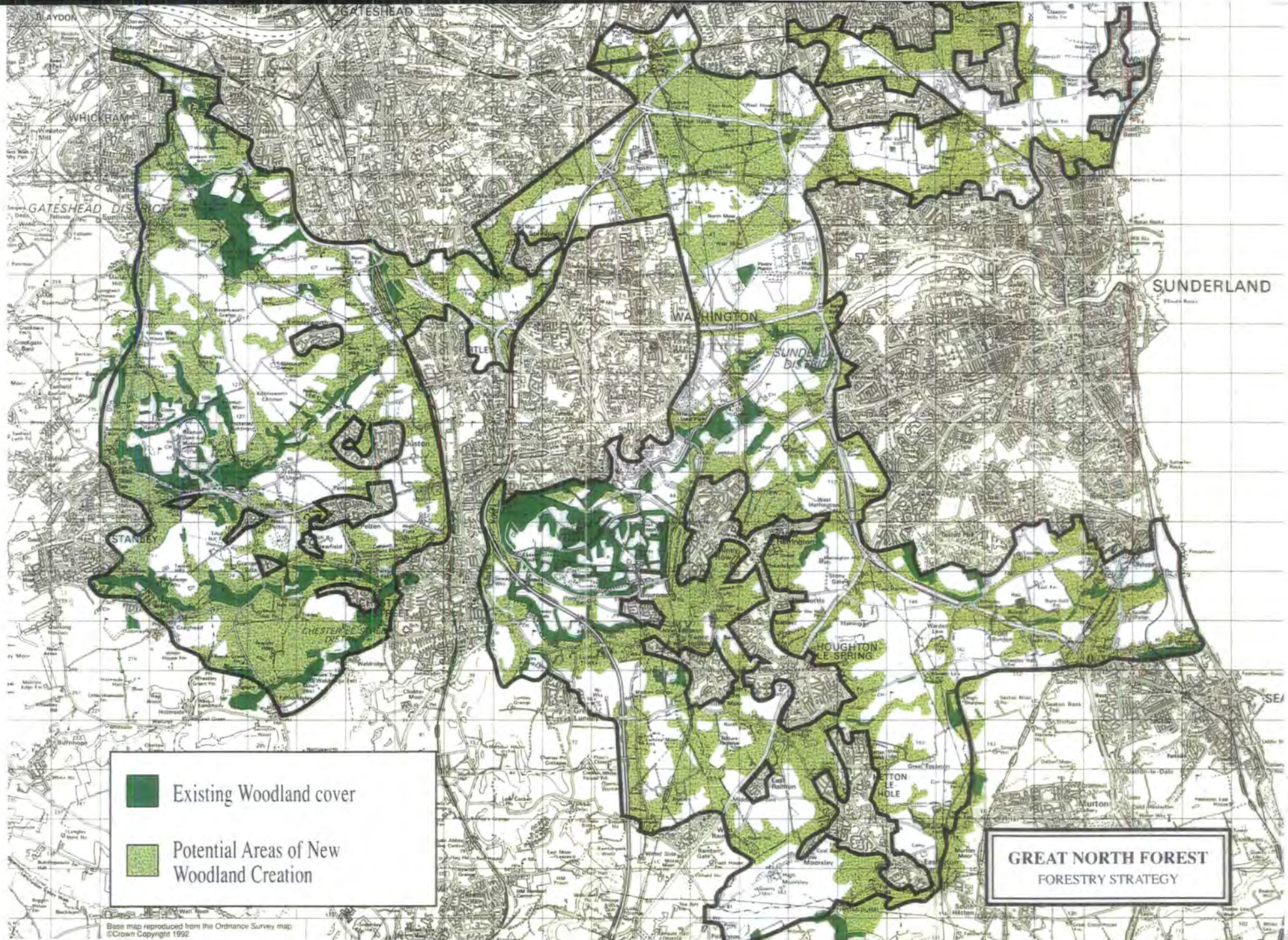
Great Western

Leisure and Services Department
Thamesdown Borough Council
Civic Offices, Euclid Street
Swindon
SN1 2JH
Tel: 01793 4935513
Fax: 01793 541685

Thames Chase

The Forest Lodge
Stubbers Outdoor Centre
Ockendon Road, Upminster
Essex
RM14 2TY
Tel: 01708 641880
Fax: 01708 640581







NPM Doctrines

Doctrine	Meaning	Justification
'Hands-on professional management' in the public sector	Active, visible, discretionary control of organizations from named persons at the top, 'free to manage'	Accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility for action not diffusion of power
Explicit standards and measures of performance	Definition of goals, targets, indicators of success, preferably expressed in quantitative terms, especially for professional services	Accountability requires clear statement of goals, efficiency requires 'hard look' at objectives
Greater emphasis on output controls	Resource allocation and rewards linked to measured performance; breakup of centralized bureaucracy-wide personnel management	Need to stress results rather than procedures
Shift to disaggregation of units in the public sector	Break up of formerly 'monolithic' units, unbundling of uniform management systems into corporatized units around products, operating on decentralized 'one-line' budgets and dealing with one another on an 'arms-length' basis	Need to create 'manageable' units, separate provision and production interests, gain efficiency advantages of use of contract or franchise arrangements inside as well as outside the public sector
Shift to greater competition in public sector	Move to term contracts and public tendering procedures	Rivalry as the key to lower costs and better standards
Stress on private-sector styles of management practice	Move away from military-style 'public service ethic', greater flexibility in hiring and rewards; greater use of PR techniques	Need to use 'proven' private sector management tools in the public sector
Stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use	Cutting direct costs, raising labour discipline, resisting union demands, limiting 'compliance costs' to business	Need to check resource demands of public sector and 'do more with less'

Table taken from Hood, 'A Public Management for All Seasons?', (1991), pp.4-5.

FORESTRY AUTHORITY WOODLAND GRANT SCHEME**PLANTING IN THE GREAT NORTH FOREST (Hectares)****LOCAL
AUTHORITY****PLANTING YEAR**

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	HAs	TREES
GATESHEAD								
Broadleaves	11.4	31.21	9.94	26.93	17.47	96.95		17451
Coniferous	1.2	2.15	0.10	-	2.12	5.57		12532
Shrubs	-	3.34	0.93	1.89	0.70	6.86		12348
SUNDERLAND								
Broadleaves	6.2	2.17	1.75	11.77	4.00	25.89		46602
Coniferous	0.8	-	-	-	-	0.8		1800
Shrubs	-	.08	-	-	-	0.8		1440
EASINGTON								
Broadleaves	-	-	-	0.5	-	0.5		900
Coniferous	-	-	-	-	-	-		-
Shrubs	-	-	-	-	-	-		-
CHESTER LE STREET								
Broadleaves	6.6	16.1	23.08	1.20	2.06	49.04		88272
Coniferous	5.2	0.5	2.96	-	1.34	10.00		22500
Shrubs	-	-	0.22	-	0.25	0.47		846
DURHAM								
Broadleaves	-	-	0.54	6.9	2.12	9.56		17208
Coniferous	-	-	-	1.0	-	1.0		2250
Shrubs	-	-	0.06	-	-	0.06		1350
DERWENTSIDE								
Broadleaves	2.0	1.10	9.84	155	4.65	18.14		32652
Coniferous	0.9	-	10.36	0.84	1.5	13.6		30600
Shrubs	-	-	1.90	-	0.55	2.45		4410
S TYNESIDE								
Broadleaves	1.3	-	-	-	-	1.3		2340
Coniferous	-	-	-	-	-	-		-
Shrubs	-	-	-	-	-	-		-

Grand Totals: 1990 - 1994 (Trees/Shrubs)

Broadleaves 205,452

Coniferous 69,682

Shrubs 20,394

Grand Totals: 1990 - 1994 (Hectares)

242.99 broadleaves, conifers & shrubs

Total Number of Trees/Shrubs: (1990 - 1994) 295,528

NB. The stocking density of trees/shrubs can vary for scheme to scheme: 1100 to 2500 per hectare. (1 Ha = 2.47 acres)

Assume an average of 1800 for broadleaves and shrubs per hectare.

Assume an average of 2250 for conifers per hectare.

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